

SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF TOTS: PREPARING AGES
TWO TO FIVE FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE THROUGH
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND THE ARTS

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
December 2015

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ABSTRACT

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The context for this project is Omega Baptist Church, in Dayton, Ohio. It will show how children ages two to five can be spiritually formed as they learn to participate in Christian worship through Christian education and the arts. Scriptures denoting acts of service were taught through a series of four sessions, including pre and post testing, observation of, and evaluations, followed by two weeks preparation for participating worship. The training will exhibit the importance of teaching a child God's Word, particularly through music, and to learn how to serve, at home, and in the church.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A deep amount of gratitude goes to the myriad group of mentors, and peer groups that have given great support and advice during this doctoral process. I wish to particularly thank Dr. Harold Hudson, the Dean of the doctoral program, Dr. Daryl Hairston, Dr. Lucius Dalton, my mentors, and especially my faculty consultant, Dr. Rychie Breidenstein, who labored with me long and hard.

A special thank you goes to my professional associates, Dr. Willie Jackson, Pastors Daryl and Vanessa Ward, and Dr. Crystal Walker, who stepped in when the need was most urgent. I could never fully express the deep gratitude that I have for Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis for her timely assistance. A tribute goes to my friend and supporter, Dr. Bridget Weatherspoon, who is always there for me.

I also thank my contextual associates, who were a great asset in helping to establish such a successful doctoral project. A special thanks goes to Jennifer Adams, the Children's Ministry Leader, Cheryl Williams, my assistant, Sandra Artis, the Children's Wardrobe Leader, and her husband Benjamin Artis, videographer.

I truly thank my husband, Rev. Ronald Norvell, who displayed tremendous patience and love during trying times; my parents, Deacon Jewell and Estella Wilson, and my daughters, Melody and Marcy, for their encouragement and prayers. Our family singing group, "Wilson Family and Friends," and The Kings' Kids," who sang the song that God initially poured into my spirit; and Jacob Turner, Keisan Green, and my cousin

Gale Berry (Buddy), who helped me to compose the song for this doctoral study project. A heartfelt thank you goes to my granddaughter Nastassia; who was a God-send with her computer skills.

Our family singing group, “Wilson Family and Friends, and The TOTS¹ and their parents deserve a special blessing for the tolerance they displayed during the lessons and preparations for the initial project. Omega’s congregation, deacons, ushers, greeters, musicians, the official board members, ministers, sound board members, and everyone who participated in this project, I ask God to bless abundantly.

Last, but not least, I thank the Lord God Almighty, for being my Jehovah-Gibbor, my truth, buckler and shield, my goodness, mercy and grace that follows me all the days of my life, as I persevered during the entire process.

¹ TOTS, acronym for Teaching our Tots (Toddlers) to Serve

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to all children ages two to five who go forth to serve in the kingdom of God with confidence and authority. The TOTS' parents are also given honor for their dedication, for teaching their children and setting an example as they go about their daily activities.

To my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, who taught my siblings and me, the importance of knowing God, and the Word of God. Because of them, I know and understand why it is so important to teach children at a young age to be servants of God.

To my children, and to their children, and their children's children, to keep the faith, and continue to teach God's Word through song, as we as a family have done for generations. Let them forever remember to teach them to always have a song uplifting the name of Jesus in their hearts.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASL	American Sign Language
CTM	Children Theological Movement
KIDS	Kids in Divine Service
OBC	Omega Baptist Church
TOTS	Teaching Our Tots To Serve

The point is that each generation has some unique gifts to share with the others and each has some unique needs for which it turns to the other generations for help and support. The work of the church is only intergenerational when there is active sharing of these gifts and needs across the generations, when persons of different generations minister to each other.

—George E. Koehler, *Learning Together*

INTRODUCTION

As the Tots sang their featured song for youth Sunday, little five-year-old Preston, the leader of the song entitled, “The Armor of God,” sang with confidence and authority, as he led the other TOTS in singing and demonstrating the armor of God.

When Preston got to the verse that describes the Word of God, there was a slight pause before he led the words, “the Sword of the Spirit,” He wore a belt around his waist that had a pouch that served as his sword holder; a tiny little Bible represented his Sword (God’s Word). Preston was determined that he was not going to sing the verse until he could pull out that small Bible, and hold it up for all to see. Once Preston retrieved the Bible from its pouch, he loudly and authoritatively sang, “The Sword of the Spirit,” and demonstrated what it was.

Preston in his determination to demonstrate what he was singing about, God’s armor, shows how serious children are about giving praise to God, by showing what they have been taught and have learned about God in song, for all to see, hear and know.

This experience of the littlest children singing God’s praises, came about when I noticed that children ages two to five were not participating during the youth services at Omega Baptist Church. This gave me the initiative to start a TOTS Choir enabling them to participate in the youth services, just like the elder children, ages six through twelve, (KIDS, Kids in Divine Service) and the teens, ages thirteen through nineteen.

The TOTS, KIDS, and Teens all go to their age-appropriate church during regular church service. Three Sundays of the month, they learn in their own environment, and study God's Word. Therefore, the TOTS were learning and having special studies, other than Sunday school, but during youth services, they were sitting in the pews looking bored and neglected. In other words, if the other youth could learn about Christ, and share their progress with the congregation, the TOTS should be no exception. They could participate in the services during youth Sunday, greet the congregants, usher, hand out bulletins, and help take up the offering, thereby acting as servants of God. In so doing they can learn that it is all a part of serving God.

Children have participated in worship services since the early centuries. In the book by Christopher Page, *The Christian West and Its Singers: The First Thousand Years*, he mentions how children sang psalms in the Ethiopian version of the church order commonly known as the *Apostolic Tradition*, which came unto us as early as the middle years of the second century, and continued into the third or fourth century.¹

This document will exhibit how toddlers can learn the Word of God through praise and worship, singing songs of praise to our Lord and Savior, learning words that pertain to the scriptures, and getting an understanding of what those words mean. In an article by Chad Fothergill, he explains how youth grow into an understanding of the scriptures. He states, "Early authors frequently acknowledged that the youths would 'grow into' an understanding of the text, even if all the words did not make sense."²

Children have participated in services dating back to the early centuries. It is amazing to

¹ Christopher Page, *The Christian West and its Singers: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 50.

² Chad Fothergill, "Blessed Youths in the Early Church," *Cross Accent* 22, no.1 (Spring 2014): 34, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

see how children as young as two years of age, or even younger, grasp the meanings of words and retain them. As was mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, when little Preston could relate the Sword to being the Bible, then demonstrate that he understood, and knew what that meant as he held up the small Bible.

All of this explains how important it is to teach our children God's Word in an aesthetic way. In Chapter One the story will be told of how God's Word was revealed to me as a child, to help me to know, and understand God's Word through song. It records my journey of faith, which led to the enhancement of toddlers at Omega, to learn God's Word through Christian education and the arts. At Omega Baptist Church, toddlers go to what is known as TOTS Church, two to three Sundays of the month, to study and learn the Bible.

The next four chapters of this project consist of an exploration of the biblical, historical, theological, and theoretical foundations, which lead to preparing the children to learn and know of God and the Word. The biblical foundation presents scriptural evidence of how it is important to teach children God's Word, on a daily basis. It also establishes the fact that children are important to Jesus, and part of the Kingdom of God. The historical foundation captures the history of music used in the church. Music is a key component in teaching children God's Word, and showing them how to serve in an aesthetic way. It also features historians who are profoundly important in the area of music ministry in the church. The third foundation, the theological portion, describes the theology of children. Here writers have recently ventured into this field to examine theological thoughts on children. Finally, there is a discussion of studies that have been done concerning the development of children. This theoretical investigation shows how

children are taught the Word of God through song and worship and the arts, and Christian education. Writers who have been instrumental in theoretically helping children to serve in this capacity are discussed.

The last chapter of this document is the project analysis. This includes the methodology used, the manner in which the project was implemented, and a summation of what was learned. The research design was developed to include individual interviews, pre and post testing, observations and surveys, which helped to measure the growth, and understanding that occurred by those TOTS and parents who participated in the training and the outcomes of such training. Collected data is shared that is gathered from the children and their parents and the congregation of OBC.

This last section of the study, the project analysis is not the end of the process. It is reflective of the positive outcome of the initial model, and suggests how it can be advantageous to churches throughout the world.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

When I joined Omega Baptist church, I knew that I wanted to work with women, couples, and/or children. I started teaching Sunday school to the children who were six to eight years old. I felt this was where I was supposed to use the skills, gifts and talents that God had given me. However, looking back at my grandchildren, and the singing group that I started with them at an early age, known as “The King’s Kids,” in the late 80s and early 90s; and then starting King’s Kids II, with the great-grandchildren in 2008, I realize working with younger children is one of the greatest gifts that God has given me.

I can relate it to the song, “I have a Testimony,” and the first verse in the song, “When I look back over my life, and I think things over, I can truly say that I’ve been blessed, I have a testimony.” My testimony is that my parents taught me, along with my siblings, God’s Word through song, the arts and Christian education; I have done the same with my children, my children’s children, and my great grandchildren.

The experiences that I have received from childhood, and throughout my life, have given me the motivation to write this project, and teach toddlers how to love, worship and serve God. This study will reveal how children at Omega Baptist Church are spiritually formed, taught God’s Word through Christian education and the arts, and are taught how to become servants of God.

Context Analysis

The church where I serve, and the context for this study is the Omega Baptist Church. An American Baptist congregation, Omega's mission statement reads: "We are a People Empowered by the Holy Spirit to Serve Families, Communities, and the World. Omega's Vision: 'Empathetic Fellowship': The way we treat one another and take care of each other's needs is critical to the life of the church. 'Evangelism': Evangelism will drive our efforts as we engage issues of Social Justice. This will be our mantra. Omega will be in the streets of our communities, evangelizing, praying, and marching, 'Saving Souls, Disciplining Souls for Justice, Taking Care of Souls.'"¹ Omega is under the leadership of the pastor, Rev. Dr. Daryl Ward, and the Rev. Dr. Vanessa Oliver Ward, who serves as co-pastor.

The Omega Baptist Church, (OBC), has two locations: Northwest Dayton at 1821 Emerson Avenue and Dayton View, 1810 Harvard Boulevard, Dayton, Ohio. Dayton is a city in southwest Ohio that covers 55.65 square miles. Ohio is a state in the northeast Central United States, a part of the Midwest; its area is 44, 838 square miles, and Columbus is the capital. Dayton is located in Montgomery County, with a population of 142,148 as of the 2011 census. The African American population of Dayton is a total of 42.9% and the White population is 51.7 %. Of the population that reported to the census bureau, 81.3% of persons ages twenty-five plus are high school graduates or higher and fifteen percent have a Bachelors' degree. The percentage of children aged two to five in

¹ "Omega Baptist Church," accessed January 1, 2009, <http://www.omegabaptistchurch.org/omega/>.

2010 was 6.5; the percentage in 2014 has decreased to 6.2 %.² The number of toddlers at Omega Baptist Church (with parents on the church roll, and with an active membership of over twelve hundred), is approximately thirty-five. Since September, an estimation of twenty-five toddlers attend TOTS Church, on a regular basis.³

Omega's pastor, Daryl Ward, values education; he gives members every opportunity to be led toward the goal of furthering their education. It is because of Pastor Daryl Ward that I have pursued this Doctor of Ministry, taking the necessary steps to further my education.

The history of Omega began with a visionary, the Reverend H.J. Lanier. Rev. Lanier, who served as pastor of the Little Rock Baptist Church in Dayton for sixteen years, with his devoted wife, Sister Ethel Lanier. Upon his departure from the Little Rock Baptist Church in 1980, at ninety years of age, there were approximately one hundred faithful members of the church who followed him. At this time they did not have a church building, but they continued to worship and study the Word of God.

The members held their first worship service at H.H. Roberts Funeral Home, and worshipped there for one year. As they searched for a church home, they worshipped at the Imperial Bingo Hall, Martin's Restaurant Hall in Westown, and various other locations in Dayton. In 1982, they purchased the building at 649 Miller Avenue. In October of that year, they officially became the Omega Missionary Baptist Church.

Early on Sunday morning, October 4, 1987, Rev. Lanier awakened his wife, Ethel, and said, "Baby don't worry about the church. I saw it this morning in a dream. It was

² Dayton (City) Quick Facts from the U. S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011, <http://quickfacts.gov/gfd/states/39/3912000.html>, accessed December 11, 2012.

³ Jennifer Adams, Leader of the Youth Ministry at Omega Baptist Church, "Text received," October 22, 2015.

sitting on a hill and people were streaming into its doors from all over.” Later that morning, Pastor Lanier was granted one of his heart’s desires, to die in the pulpit after preaching the Gospel.

In January of 1988, a committee was formed to begin the search for a new pastor. In March of 1988, God sent the Rev. Dr. Daryl Ward and his family to Omega. Under the leadership of Rev. Ward, the church grew in dynamic proportions. From 1988 to 1989, the Omega Church grew approximately 200 %.

A new ministry structure was established, along with the Vision and Mission Statement. The members of Omega were experiencing Transformational Ministry and were eager to share the good news wherever they went. In January of 1990, Omega burned the mortgage on the property located at 649 Miller Avenue. By 1991, Omega had outgrown the Miller Avenue facility. After a visit by the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. James Williams, Omega was offered the opportunity to hold worship service in the auditorium of Nettie Lee Roth High School. Just like the Omega of old, the members pulled together to prepare the school each Sunday for morning worship.

Worshipping at Roth, with its many classrooms afforded Omega the ability to expand in the area of Christian Education. The Church could now break out into smaller classes, and a variety of new Sunday school classes were being offered. It was at Roth that the Youth Explosion was born, setting the foundation for a full-fledged youth ministry. Youth Explosion held two citywide events with a combined attendance of over four thousand young people. Young children took part in serving in the congregation for a number of years, but due to a lack of committed volunteers and leaders continuing in this endeavor, the ministry of younger children discontinued. During OBC’s thirty-first

church Anniversary, Rev. Joshua Ward spoke on how transformational the Youth Explosion was, but he also let us know according to his sermon title, “There’s Work Yet To Be Done.” This project is a reconnection of that process, with the work continuing. Other exciting new ministries were established to meet the needs of Omega’s ever growing family. The Singles Ministry, Women’s Ministry, Men’s Ministry and K.I.D.S. (Kids In Divine Service), began in 1992. The first female deacon was named, and a formal worship team was established.

In 1993, while still worshipping at Roth, the membership voted to start a new building committee to find a facility that Omega could grow into. Pastor Daryl Ward, who was then serving as pastor at Omega, and vice president at United Theological Seminary, became aware of the fact that the congregation at Temple Israel was seeking to move and had an interest in selling their property. Ward assembled a team to negotiate the purchase. Deacon John Prowell and Brother Jesse Lewis were instrumental in handling the negotiations for the purchase of the property located at 1821 Emerson Avenue.

In December of 1994, Omega marched into their new church edifice at the corner of Salem and Emerson Avenues. Omega was blessed to have burned their mortgage on the day they moved in. During this time Omega had a membership of over 900 and was nurturing over forty ministries to meet the needs of families, communities and the world. The move to a new home ushered in a new era for Omega, one in which they began to broaden their focus.

In 1995, after officially signing with the American Baptist Association, Omega opened their Family Life Bookstore and began the production of the Visions Newsletter.

Omega made its first pilgrimage as a church to Ghana, West Africa where Pastor Ward was installed as Chief of Economic Development in the village of Ekumfi Asokwa, which became Omega's sister community. The two entities exchanged proclamations of dedication with each other. They began their relationship with World Vision International for the implementation of an Area Development Program for Ekumfi Asokwa and surrounding areas.

The Omega Movement TV Ministry began in 1997 and was broadcast to households throughout the Dayton area. The Omega Community Development Corporation, (CDC), was also established that year to address contemporary and urban issues for the Dayton Community.

Omega also hosted its first citywide Resurrection Celebration at Memorial Hall, attracting over 25,000 people from the Dayton Community. In 1998, the city-wide Resurrection Celebration had to be moved to the University of Dayton Arena to accommodate the overwhelming response from the community. Over six thousand people attended the 1998 Resurrection Celebration. Omega continued to hold the Celebration at the University of Dayton Arena until 2007.

A church-wide bible study was introduced and over three hundred people attended. A ministry coordinator was assigned to support the ministries, which made them stronger than in previous years. A new capital campaign was launched; called "Possess the Faith, Possess the Land," which helped move Omega toward the successful retirement of their debt.

In 2000, many new programs were added to the Omega Church. Omega partnered with the City of Dayton with the understanding that there would be new housing, a new

church edifice and a Family-Life Center. The Omega School of Excellence was established under the leadership of Rev. Vanessa, which educated and nurtured children in the Dayton community until 2008.

In 2004, Rev. Vanessa Oliver Ward was appointed by Pastor Ward as Co-Pastor. Pastor became ill and Rev. Vanessa was able to assume the role of shepherding the Omega flock, which she did astoundingly well. During the progressive recovery of Pastor Ward the church completed negotiations on the purchase of the United Theological Seminary, property, June 2005.

In 2006, the church traveled to Opelousas, Louisiana with food, clothes and water for the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. In March, of 2007 the pastors and fifty-six members traveled to New Orleans to assist in the clean up and to rebuild homes and schools for the people of New Orleans.

In 2008, with many challenges to the city, state and world in the failing of the economy, loss of jobs, and increased housing foreclosures, the Omega Church continued to persevere. Nevertheless, the decision was made to close OSE. The church decided to narrow its focus to serve more extensively the families and communities with educational and evangelistic opportunities for all. Omega launched the 2008-2009 Church year with the Fall revival series, "The Urban Church in Position-Staying Relevant, Prophetic and Hopeful." The revival positioned the church to move into the new-church year focused and postured for change.

In September the AWANA Club for youths three to eleven years of age began. Awana is a Bible Study Club for youths that helps them to memorize Scripture and to learn elementary biblical principles and truths.⁴

The Associate Ministers started preaching at the surrounding nursing homes, and preaching on Sundays and Wednesdays. The ministers maintained weekly hospital visits and grief and loss support. The Social Justice Ministry performed Prayer Vigils for slain individuals in the community, and sponsored the Angel Tree Outreach, providing gifts and Christian based activities to three hundred children of incarcerated parents. The Omega Women's Ministry was renamed WOW—"Women of Worth." The Youth Ministry excelled, increasing from eighty-four to 160 active teens; during the Teen's Outreach for Hell Zone and Midnight Service⁵, close to 1,000 participants supported it.

The New Childcare Room Project History

In 2006, under the direction of Rev. Vanessa Ward, several mothers met to discuss a growing concern about the children's ministries. During these discussions, it became apparent that there was an incredible need to revitalize aspects of these programs targeted to children under the age of eleven. It was their vision to establish programs that would reflect excellence and serve as a model for other children's ministries. Therefore, it began small, in order to build a solid foundation, and then ultimately to serve all of the needs of the congregation's youngest members.

⁴ "AWANA" (1 East Bode Road, Streamwood IL: AWANA Clubs International, 2002).

⁵ Hell Zone and Midnight Service are alternatives for Trick or Treat Night, during Halloween.

They began by focusing on the areas of greatest need, which was developing a program for children two to five years of age to be held during the 8:00 am service.

Therefore, in January 2007, “Tiniest Hearts Ministry”, which was more like a daycare, for babies, began as a sister ministry to TOTS Church, in order to serve children between the ages of two and five. TOTS Church is a place where toddlers can learn about Jesus, just as the older children and teens. The purpose of both of these ministries is to provide Christian education in an age appropriate environment.

Through the work of Tiniest Hearts as well as TOTs Church, it became apparent that space dedicated for these ministries was necessary. A driving motivation for this space was based on security issues that arose when the space was being used by different groups on Sundays. For example, Tiniest Hearts Ministry used the former library during church service, but that same space was also used as a Sunday school class. During transition times, the room would become extremely hectic and potentially a child could walk off with the wrong individual. For these reasons, Tiniest Hearts Ministry and TOTs Church were granted permission to renovate the Chapel.

After an amazing team of volunteers logged numerous hours helping to make the renovation a reality (my husband, a professional painter, was one of the volunteers), the room was dedicated on October 7, 2007 and the Tiniest Hearts and TOTs Church both started operation seven days later.

In the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the Children’s Ministry went through a pruning stage. TOTs and K.I.D.S Church were cancelled from September-February 2009. The end result was that there would be trained volunteers, and that there would be enough volunteers for all of the youth services for every Second, Third, and Fourth Sundays of

the month services during both services. The Tiniest Hearts Church did not resume, due to lack of volunteers, but the TOTs Church reconvened in March of 2009.⁶

Omega Baptist TOTs Music Ministry

The author has always had a passion for teaching children; teaching the children in Sunday school at Omega from the ages of six to eight was thought to be her forte. However, after coming back from an assignment at another church, I started working in the TOTs Church.

As a leader of TOTs Church, and a member of the praise and worship team, a member of the majority of the choirs at Omega, and a musician, the author noticed that the TOTs, who now consist of children between the ages of two and five were not included in the fifth Sunday worship services conducted by the youth.

Because the author learned from the Bible before she could read or even talk; because her parents sang to her even while she was in her mother's womb; and as a small child her parents continued to teach her songs of praise and worship that gave praise and honor to the Most High God. She knew the children could learn about God's Word even at their young age. When the author would hear the word of God read, as a child and then started to read it for herself, she recognized the words and could recite the scriptures she had learned from singing them as a child.

In 2009, the author contacted the leader over the youth and requested to be able to start a choir for the TOTS. She relayed to the leader that the children ages two to five

⁶ Paraphrased from, "Omega Baptist Church Anniversary Program: Stirring the Fire," History, (Dayton, OH, 2009), 5-9.

need to be utilized in the services just as much as the other children. The parents also expressed their desire to have their children represented during the fifth Sunday worship.

A child is never too young to learn to sing God's praises and to stand before God's people and minister in song. Most children will stand before a group of people and sing boldly, with joy, the songs they have learned.

The author has organized and established a repertoire of songs for the TOTs to sing for the youth worship services. She has a unique book of songs, *100 Bible Stories: 100 Bible Songs*⁷ in her library that she has dedicated to her great-grandchildren to teach them the Scriptures through song. The book gives the corresponding stories from the Bible that also gives the text (scripture) for each song. This enables the children to learn and know what they are singing about.

Each time the children have sung before the congregation they have warmed the hearts of the people. They have melted the people's hearts to the point of them wanting to hear more from the children, and therefore, they encourage them as they sing, which gives the children confidence. American Sign Language (ASL) is also taught for some of the words, which is a way of using a different language to minister to the people and to give honor to God. Dance is also another way to teach the children how to minister and serve as well. Another form of ministering is to use drama (acting) as the children relay the word of God to the people and to themselves.

The author is teaching the children songs that are most often no longer sung in churches today, such as hymns, old spirituals, and songs of yesterday. The good old songs, as the saying goes, are songs that have meaning and depth so that the congregation,

⁷ Stephen Elkins, *100 Bible Stories: 100 Bible Songs* (Brentwood, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2004).

as well as the children, can have a better understanding of what the Word says and what it means. The members remember some of these old songs and softly sing along with the children.

Some of the older children today do not know what a hymn is, nor do they understand what is being taught in some of the classes in church. The author wants to take the children back; back to the good old days; back to when things were decent and in order; back to establishing solid ground.

Spiritual Autobiography

The author's personal growth and love for music and teaching children to sing, worship and praise the Lord comes from being blessed to have received that same teaching before birth.

As a child, learning the Word of God was an ongoing part of life. While in the womb, the Word of God was read daily, along with the singing of songs of edification. Since conception, worship and arts has been instrumental in my life. This poem gives an awareness of who I was to be, and who I have become:

Before being born, while in my mother's womb,
The Lord had prepared my parents, for my destiny.
Hence, the foundation had been laid of who I was to be.
Just know . . . this is my decree.
My mother named me Judith from the tribe of Judah (meaning praise),
And all of my days-I know that birth was given to me, to give God praise.
I am here to tell you-to sing to you-things about me.
Listen (read) –as you are given my Spiritual Autobiography. ⁸

Due to the fact that the author came from a long line of priests, Levites, and singers; singing, playing instruments, studying the Word, was a natural phenomenon.

⁸ Norvell, Judith, "My Spiritual Autobiography," Written, 2008.

Her daddy's and mothers,' fathers and grandfathers were pastors, who worked diligently in God's vineyard. She has uncles, cousins, a niece, son-in-law, step-son, and a brother-in-law, who are in the ministry, thus far.

The author's first sermon was at the age of five, when she was narrator for the Christmas play at her elementary school. The writer tries to think back to those days to visualize how, as a kindergartner, she was selected to read the narration (Matthew and Luke 2) for the Christmas play out of a school that went up to the eighth grade. The writer knows that it was due to the coaching that she received from her mother and grandmother. The writer's mother told her that she would cry with joy when she would practice and say the word *diligently*, because she spoke it so distinctly. The writer's mother told her she was chosen to be the narrator because she spoke articulately. Her grandmother, who was the first lady at their Wesleyan Methodist church, continuously had her read God's Word to her, particularly Ruth and Esther, and to do recitations in front of the congregation. The training from her grandmother, helped prepare her for the ministry. It also helped her to excel in the organization called International Training in Communication, ITC, which is an organization relative to Toastmasters. The author won many speech contests while participating in the organization.

Music was played and listened to more than TV watching in the author's house as a child. The author started singing solos at the age of five. She remembers when her mother would share stories about her singing. The writer would sing solos at the age of five. Her mother told her that she would raise her arms as if she was a star, at the end of her rendition, like Kate Smith used to do. She would for example, sing Kate's Smith

arrangement of “God Bless America.”⁹ At the end she would sing-“my home sweet home, my home sweet home,” then raise her hands up and out. She really loved that song; Kate Smith was evidently an inspiration to her.

The writer was serious about God’s Word, for as mentioned in her introductory poem, she learned the word while in her mother’s womb. She actually learned to sing the word of God before she learned how to talk. Being raised in a Wesleyan Methodist Church, she learned from listening to and singing hymns, anthems, sacred music, spirituals, and gospel. She listened to classical music and all genres of music. Music was a very important part of her life. As children, the writer and her sisters sang all over the state as “The Wilson Trio,” with their mother as the accompanist on the piano. The trio later joined by their brother, who was born when they were teenagers, plays the bass. They have recently gone into the studio to record.

The writer also sang with a group called the “Constellations” while in high school. The group sang at concerts and talent shows in the school, and at nursing homes. She even sang on “The Uncle Orrie Show,”¹⁰ with the group, and tried out for “The Ted Mack Show.”¹¹

The writer loved music with a deep passion. While at Nettie lee Roth High School, she excelled on the clarinet and received the honor of being in the first chair, in the first row of the orchestra, or band. While in West Carrollton, where the writer attended school from the third grade to eight grade, she had the honor of being in the best band in the

⁹ Berlin, Irving, “God Bless America,” Sung by Kate Smith, 1938.

¹⁰ Lewis, Al, Producer, The Uncle Orrie Show: A Children’s TV Show, Aired on WCPO-TV, 1950-1985.

¹¹ Amateur Hour TV Series, The Ted Mack Show, 1948-1970.

state of Ohio. The writer would have gotten the John Phillip Souza Award, but because she was not able to attend school during the first semester of her senior year, she was not able to receive it.

The author has sung with professional gospel singing groups, such as “Sammy Stephens and The Ephesians Gospel Singing Group, where she sang, and traveled extensively throughout the USA, Canada and the Bahamas. She also sang on Sammy Stephens television show, The Gospel Music Showcase. She has sung as a soloist at various events, such as singing “The National Anthem,” at the Defense Electronics Supply Center. She has also sung on the TV Station, “TBN, and many other events.”

When the writer’s grandchildren were small, she started a singing group with them, and called them “the Kings’ Kids.” They have sung all over Dayton, in places such as Sinclair Community College at Blair Hall, and they served monthly at Parkside projects where they ministered to underprivileged children. The Kings’ Kids consisted of six grandchildren, twin nephews and niece. The oldest grandchild was five years old, who played the drums. The other children ages ranged from four to age one. The grandchildren and nephew and niece now have children who are part of the singing group called, “The King’s Kids part II.

Her parents, who have sung together since high school, will celebrate their seventieth wedding anniversary this June. Still rendering beautiful music at the ages of ninety and eighty-seven; they have left a legacy for the author and the rest of her family. The family; mother, father, sister, brother, daughter, aunts, and friends, now have a singing group, called “The Wilson Family and Friends,” who sing at various events, to the glory of God.

The writer's daddy always tells the story that if his children could not sing, it meant that they were switched in the hospital nursery at birth, and someone else had his children. Thank God, the writer and her siblings are singers and musicians; all of the children sing and play instruments. Therefore, wherever the author has worshipped, and worked in God's vineyard, she has worked with children, to encourage them in the Lord, and prepare them to serve in God's Kingdom.

It was at the age of eleven when the writer gave her life to Jesus Christ. It was at the church in which she was raised, First Wesleyan Methodist Church of Dayton, Ohio, known as the oldest African American Wesleyan Methodist Church in Dayton, Ohio. The church was known to be a part of the Ohio Underground Railroad, to help runaway slaves reach freedom. On this particular Sunday, the organist was playing the hymn "When He Cometh"¹², which we know as "Precious Jewel," the song that was played signaling the children to come forth for communion. After communion the Holy Spirit was operating at such a heightened level that at the call to discipleship, most of the young people ages ten to twelve went up to the altar crying, and asking God to forgive them for all of their sins, and accept them to become a part of the Body of Christ.

Education was also an important aspect of the author's life. Her parents were instrumental in instilling a desire to pursue an education. Having a mother who sang like a Nightingale, (the name she was called in school), who would have been an opera singer, if she had accepted the scholarship that she had received to attend Marian Andersons School of Music, and a father (called Iron, or Leather Lungs), who attended Morehouse College in Atlanta to obtain a degree in music; it became more important for them to

¹² William O. Cushing, Words, 1856, Gary F. Root, Music: Jewels, 1866.

raise their children, to hopefully obtain the education that they did not complete.

Therefore, the author had a love for teaching children; with a desire to teach them music as a Kindergarten teacher, or to help them to recover from sickness, as a pediatric nurse.

With the caring of a family of her own, and helping to make ends meet, the author was not able to pursue her goal of majoring in a degree involving children, music or science, as previously desired; although, she did take minor courses in those studies. Education further than high school, consisted of studies connected with her government job. The author became a government employee right out of high school. She worked at the local air force base as a supply clerk then transferred to the government installation in Kettering, Ohio. The author worked many jobs, while there; such as a peripheral equipment operator, computer operator, and technician; management assistant to the manager of the administrative management office director; and a publication affairs liaison. Moving to Cleveland, Ohio, the author worked at the federal building, as a management assistant correcting military pay, for a year. She later moved back to work at the federal building in Cleveland, Ohio, working another year as a communications security custodian. After retiring, the author became a photographer for the local hospitals, taking new-born babies pictures. She also became a foster mother.

Music was still prominent in the writer's life as she worked. She sang in the government installation's chorale of which her parents were members and directors (they both worked on base). The chorale sang for the Good Friday Protestant Services at the church across the street from the base, and at the Catholic Services which were held in the auditorium of the base. The chorale also sang during Christmas, caroling all over the base. The writer's daughters also came to the base every Good Friday and Christmas. The

writer also taught her daughters the word of God, by teaching them the songs that she had learned. The girls knew all of the songs that the chorale sang, and sang right along with them.

Education was a continuous endeavor for the writer. While working for the government, the author was a student of the local community college, for about thirty years. However, once the author retired from her government job, after thirty-six years of service, she was able to further her education toward the calling that God had placed upon her life. While attending the community college, she majored in Logistics Management, Communications and Arts, and Journalism. She also attended The Children's Institute of Writing, and has taken Basic American Sign Language while working for the government. She has obtained her Bachelor's Degree, in Organizational Management, and a Master's Degree in Divinity, and is now working on her Doctorate degree.

Although, the author worked a regular nine to five job, she continued to work in the ministry. She served as a youth pastor in several churches, as a youth choir director, as a co-pastor with her ex-husband, and a writer for a Christian newspaper, and weekly newspaper.

The author joined Omega Baptist Church in the fall of 2004. She became an associate minister there, after having been an associate minister at a holiness church in Cincinnati, Oh where she was first ordained in 1986, and then at a non-denominational church, in April of 2002. The author's oldest daughter and family were inspirational in leading her to Omega, in 2004. It is rewarding to worship with family, which is the way God would have it to be. Since joining Omega, the author united in marriage with her

husband, in 2007, who is a blessing to her, working with her in the ministry as an associate minister and as leaders of the prayer ministry at Omega.

Ministry of Children

As the children are being taught, it is mandatory that the parents are also either being taught, or working with their children to help teach them the word of God. After each lesson the author gives the parents a take home page of what the child learned that day in TOTs Church. The TOTs were then using Awana (at the Veterans Administration, VA, for Sunday school, the author continued to use, the Kids Sunday School Place).¹³ At the time, the author worked as a student chaplain at the Veterans Administration, (VA), while enrolled in Clinical Pastoral Education, CPE, She served as the Sunday school teacher for the children, at the Home Ministries Church pastored by the head chaplain, which was located on the VA grounds.

There is another book¹⁴ that the author has dedicated to her great-grand-children that exhibits how teaching can be introduced in order to have the entire family learn the word of God. She created the study for her Christian Education Class at UTS, during her M-Div studies, but believes that it is something that could be advantageous to families. This contextual paper expounds upon the value of what it means to go to church as adults, and to take your children with you. At Omega where the mission is to serve families, etc., it reflects how important it is to serve and learn how to serve. It is something that this author feels is important for families (parents and their children) to know, and she feels it

¹³ Kids Sunday School Place, Inc., "Sunday School Take Home Page," accessed January 1, 2009, <http://www.kidssundayschool.com/GradeSchool/Lessons/bible05t.php>.

¹⁴ Matt and Liza Jacobson, *The Big 10 for Little Saints: Helping Children Understand The 10 Commandments* (Sisters, OR: Loyal Publishing, Inc., 1999).

is worth mentioning, to maybe encourage others who are in the need of teaching their children and learning together.

The songs from the song book¹⁵ previously mentioned, is a good book to use for the study and the Big 10 book¹⁶ exhibits how to teach your child to learn the right way to live for God.

This author was taught well as a child and desires parents, particularly young parents of today to know how to live for God and how to teach their children to do the same. At Omega, this is an ongoing process, not to babysit, but to teach children the word through song, dance, signing and drama; through worship and the arts.

I encountered a great experience, with the influence that I received from my parents exemplifying the process of teaching us, as we learned together, the Word through Christian education, and the arts. The awareness and love of the arts being utilized in a Christian setting, particularly for children, brought this project into fruition.

Conclusion

The author is aware of the fact that in most churches, children have to wait until they are five or six years old, before they can participate in serving in the church. Most churches do not allow children to sing in the church choir until they are Kindergarteners, or first grade students. The author remembers how as a child, recitation of poems for Christmas, Easter, and Children's Day was the extent of children participating in the church services. The author was blessed to have parents who were over the music

¹⁵ Elkins, *100 Bible Stories*.

¹⁶ Jacobson, *The Big 10*.

ministry, which allowed the author and others to participate in the services, such as singing, before the age of six. Nevertheless, children are so much more advanced in this generation, and we as a people of God need to start our children while they are young to serve in God's Kingdom. While observing and examining the problem of exempting TOTs (two to five year olds) from serving during the youth services likes the older children, the project of TOTS (Teaching Our Tots To Serve, ages two to five) was developed. The two to five year olds, lead devotions, sing, usher, greet, and take up the offering, while serving in God's Kingdom. It has been an endeavor that everyone looks forward to, not only the children but the adults as well. It is a practice that will continue to evolve at omega, and hopefully, at other churches throughout the world.

The writer of this ministry focus, on teaching our children God's Word, and teaching them through worship and the arts, and Christian education has garnered much from its inception. She has excelled spiritually, intellectually, socially and civilly; as a woman, a pastor, minister, teacher, student, chaplain, spouse, ex-spouse, parent, grand and great-grand parent, and all that God has given unto her to accomplish. She knows for sure that whatever God requires of her, the Lord will make it plain, as she is on this doctoral studies journey. It is certain that she will be teaching children, the word of God through Christian education, worship and the arts. The model that is being impacted is one that the Holy Spirit has shaped and will continue to develop.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Children are often referred to in the church as the “church of the future.” Technically this is true. However, children should actually be considered the church of today. Children who participate in worship services, particularly young children, bring vitality, newness, exuberance and joy to their churches. Churches that do not have children, or do not have children participating in their church services, are often dull, stagnant and close to death (closing their doors). That is why the children should be called the church of today and not just tomorrow.

It is imperative, therefore, that children are taught the Word of God while they are young. In this section on Biblical Foundations, an examination of the biblical mandate to teach children the word of God will be presented. Our children can be taught the word of God with scriptures and memorization, but it is through music (song) that is scriptural that they are most likely to learn the Word of God. In order to understand how the Bible encourages teaching and including children in the life of the church, this Biblical foundations document will consider an Old Testament and a New Testament passage that are fundamental in establishing this premise. The texts that will be used are Deuteronomy 6:5-7 for the Old Testament, and Luke 18:15-17 for the New Testament. The Old Testament pericope emphasizes the importance of parents teaching their children God’s Word continuously, and starting the teaching while they are young. The New Testament

pericope demonstrates how significant children are to Jesus. It pinpoints the fact that children, even infants are invited to come to the Lord, therefore, they should be welcome to come and participate in whatever capacity necessary to serve in God's Kingdom.

Old Testament

As previously mentioned, the Old Testament scripture which forms the Biblical foundation for this project, and supports the emphasis on involving the parents of the children, is Deuteronomy 6:5-7 (a central portion of the passage known as the Shema):

⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶ Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷ Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.¹

In the Old Testament, the first five books are called the Pentateuch. *Penta* means five and *teuchos*, scrolls or books. This part of the Bible is also called the Torah meaning law in Hebrew. The fifth book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, exemplifies intergenerational teaching, which is prevalent in this study. "Intergenerational teaching was central to certain texts, and the Shema, which was written down about 2,600 years ago, but in oral form it is much older. The Shema is probably the best brief, practical guide parents have for communicating the faith to our children."² It is the great Jewish confession of faith.

The *Shema* (a Hebrew word meaning "to hear") starts in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear o Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" This scripture precedes this doctoral

¹ Unless otherwise notified, all scripture quotes for this document are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

² C. Ellis Nelson, "Spiritual Formation: a Family Matter," *Journal of Family Ministry* 20, no.3 (Fall 2006): 13, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

document's Old Testament Scripture, Deuteronomy 6:5-7, which exhorts us all to love God with the whole heart, soul and might. It is considered to be the greatest commandment, which is to be taught to our children, basically at all times. The seventh verse of Deuteronomy 6, states that it is essential for the parents to get a full understanding that it is their responsibility to teach their children at all times; the Word of God. The importance of this parental role shows that it is necessary to explain the part of the Shema that relates to verses five, six, and seven of Deuteronomy chapter six.

The Shema is one of only two prayers that are specifically commanded in Torah (the other is *Birkat Ha-Mazon*-grace after meals). It is the oldest fixed daily prayer in Judaism, recited morning and night since ancient times. It consists of three biblical passages, two of which specifically say to speak of these things "when you lie down and when you rise up." This commandment is fulfilled by including the Shema in the liturgy for *Ma'ariv* (evening services) and *Shacharit* (morning services). Traditional prayerbooks also include a Bedtime Shema, a series of passages including the Shema to be read at home before going to bed at night.³

There are three parts or passages of the Shema. In passage 1, special emphasis is given to the first six Hebrew words of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (*Shema Yisra'el, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai ecahd*-Hear, O Israel: The Lord Is Our God, The Lord is One). Then, a six-word response is said in an undertone (*Barukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam va'ed*--Blessed is the Name of His Glorious Kingdom Forever and Ever). After a pause, Deuteronomy 6:5-9 is recited, which stresses the commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and might.⁴ Each generation taught the next the Shema, which has enabled religious tradition to continue to flourish, today.

³ *Judaism* 101: Shema, accessed May 29, 2014, <http://www.jewfaq.org/ggggg/prayer/shema.htm>.

⁴ *Judaism* 101: Shema.

These two aspects of the Shema, the practice being a continuous endeavor, and thoroughly practiced in the home, are foundational to the present DMin project. Dr.

Thomas Dozeman, a professor of Old and New Testament, at United Theological Seminary, points out.

The theme of intergenerational teaching is threaded throughout Deuteronomy. These texts are often described as instructions for catechism and they provide the structure for the Jewish Seder. The Seder, (*Sedarim*), the Hebrew word for order, and procedure, is the ceremonial Jewish dinner held on the first night of Passover. It is interconnected to God saving the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, guiding them through the wilderness and giving them instructions. These teachings are all focused on teaching the very young.⁵

In the book, *Raising Up A Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson*, a chapter written by Jack R. Lundbom entitled “Wisdom Influence in the Book of Deuteronomy” gives discourse on wisdom. He states: “Teaching of children is considered to be one of the most prominent wisdom themes in Deuteronomy.”⁶ This chapter is pertinent in establishing the fact that our children need to be taught God’s Word; and as the pericope in Deuteronomy 6:7 designates it is to be taught by their parents. Lundbom gives credence to this fact:

Teaching and learning, with a larger aim of promoting doing, are important wisdom themes. The didactic temper, according to Weinfeld, is preset as the wisdom literature because its concern is with education. Moses teaches Yahweh’s commands to the people . . . who are then supposed to teach the same to their children. . . . Teaching children is not something one believes in; it is something one does. The verb ‘to teach’ (*Piel*) appears ten times in Deuteronomy... and the verb ‘to learn’ (*Qal*) seven times. . . . The verb ‘to teach’ appears in no other book of the Pentateuch—only in Deuteronomy. . . .⁷

⁵ Dr. Tom Dozeman, e-mail message to author, July 11, 2014.

⁶ K.L. Noll and Brooks Schramm, eds., *Raising Up A Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson*, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 197-202.

⁷ Noll and Schramm, *Raising Up*, 200-201.

Jesus was surely taught to follow the Shema as a boy in his home, and in the synagogue. Jesus obviously, as a child, knew the bible, and put to memory Deuteronomy 6:5. The instruction to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and might was realistic to Jesus. Love is strong, and is often thought of as an emotion, but the love of God, and the commandment to love God goes much deeper and further than just a mere feeling. The instructions and writings of loving God is a subject that will be forever evoked.

But what can be understood about the command to love God? What does it mean?

In J. David Pleins, book, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*, emphasis is given to the importance of the love of God. In the chapter, “The Grand Narratives,” he states, “The indication is already made in Deuteronomy 1-10, through the narrative voice of the prophet Moses that love of YHWH will need to be paramount.”⁸ YHWH is supreme and of the utmost importance over everyone and everything. There is no greater love than the love of God; therefore, loving God must be preeminent.

In his book, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*, Paul D. Hanson, emphasizes that God is a God of compassion. Hanson refers to the fact that all laws in Israel were to be related to the heart, and that heart, is the heart of Yahweh. Israel’s history has shown who God truly is, a God of divine compassion, one with a loving heart. In the exodus, God’s compassion is revealed, “And he cries to me, I will

⁸ J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrews Bible: A Theological Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985), 100.

hear, for I am compassionate.”⁹ Israel was to be compassionate, holy, and righteous, because God had those qualities. Israel was to embody justice and love.¹⁰ Hanson elaborates further on the heart of Yahweh, “Fully in the spirit of the Decalogue, the torah of Deuteronomy focused first on the heart of Yahwism: that is, on worship of the one true God.”¹¹

In his essay entitled “Keep These Words in Your Heart (Deuteronomy 6:6): A Spirituality of Truth in the Context of the Shema,” J. Gordon McConville gives his interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:5-6. He considers the command in question to lie close to the heart of Deuteronomy, since the command in question immediately follows the Shema, and the love commandment in Deut.6:5. He states, “There is a connection between the name of God and the commands that follow. . . . [There] is a further connection between the love commandment and the profiling of the person addressed in terms of heart, soul, and might.”¹²

In his section on “The Words of Yahweh for all Generations,” Peter T. Vogt addresses Deuteronomy 6, by expounding upon the fact that the command in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 is for the people to write these words on their hearts. They in turn are commanded to teach the words of Yahweh to future generations of Israelites. He also develops the fact that there is an important relationship between receiving the words of Yahweh and passing them on. He reiterates these points by clearly making it known that

⁹ Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 49.

¹⁰ Hanson, *The People Called*, 170.

¹¹ Hanson, *The People Called*, 171.

¹² Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner, eds., *For Our God Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 127, 143-144.

the Israelites are expected to make sure that these words are diligently taught to their children. The main issue to be addressed is the nature of the words in Deuteronomy 6:6 (keep these words in your heart). They are to be taught to succeeding generations. In other words, the people are expected to keep Yahweh's (words) in their hearts, and to make sure that it is impressed upon their children's hearts.¹³

Loving God, according to Patrick Miller in the book *Interpretation: The Ten Commandments*, encompasses one's whole being. He comments that, "fullness is represented in the extended amplification of the love of God; 'with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.'" According to Miller, it is possible to see these phrases as simply expressing totality, meaning every part of you, everything you have and are.¹⁴ He goes on to explain how tradition has seen the above three phrases and how they should be enacted.

The case with Jewish exegesis since it has at times has at times interpreted these phrases as follows: "with all your heart," meaning with an undivided loyalty, both good and bad inclinations: "with all your soul," suggesting a loyalty even unto death and martyrdom, since the Hebrew term *nepes* can mean life—as one interpreter says, "Love him until the last drop of life is wrung out of you"; and "with all your might," pointing to the commitment of all that one has—possessions, wealth, everything given over to God. . . .¹⁵

In the *Abingdon Old Testament Commentary* on Deuteronomy, Walter Brueggemann, tells how we are to give our best as acts of "right worship of YHWH." We are to love God as the mandate states, with all of our heart, our soul, and our might

¹³ Peter T. Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology and the Significance of Torah: A Reappraisal* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 155-157.

¹⁴ Patrick D. Miller: *The Ten Commandments: Interpretation Resources for the use of Scriptures in the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 22.

¹⁵ Miller, *The Ten Commandments*, 22.

(Deuteronomy 6:5).¹⁶ Brueggemann expounds on how God's people are often insincere in the above mandate.

Instead of "all your heart," in an emotionally draining, anxiety driven society, the claims of faith receive the leftovers of commitment. . . . Instead of "all your mind," faith is increasingly a victim of "dumbing down. . . ." Instead of "all your substance," in a self-indulgent, over-spent, over-mortgaged society, investments in covenantal concerns too consists of leftovers.¹⁷

God's Word tells us to teach our children how we are to love God; however, we must first exercise within ourselves the sincerity of loving God with our total self. There is no way we as parents can actually do what God has commanded us to do, if we haphazardly adhere to the Word of God, and fake our true feelings. It has to be genuine; these words that God commands must be in our hearts.

In his journal article "That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord," James M. Hamilton, Jr., speaks on the above pericope, Deuteronomy 6, in a section entitled, "Instructions for Fathers and Kings in Deuteronomy 6 and 17." "Even before the instructions given in Deuteronomy 6, God was preparing fathers in Israel to teach their children as He outlined the celebration of the Passover. . . ."¹⁸ Hamilton then solely concentrates on Deuteronomy 6 in the next section of his article, "Instructions for Fathers in Deuteronomy 6."

He points out how fathers throughout time have been responsible for training and teaching their children in the way they are to live. In Deuteronomy 6, explicit instructions

¹⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 170.

¹⁷ Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 172.

¹⁸ James M. Hamilton, "That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord," *The Journal of Family Ministry* 1 (Fall-Winter 2010):11, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

are given on how, when and where children should be taught. In this pericope, Moses gives instructions from God to fathers.¹⁹ The hermeneutics of the passage can be understood in this way: Children are instructed by their father/parents so that they can have an answer when asked what the scriptures mean, and why they are to practice this teaching in their homes. Hamilton comments: “That Yahweh is the sole deity means that he is loved (Deuteronomy 6:5), obeyed (6:6), remembered verbally in the household (6:7). . . . Deuteronomy 6:4-5 makes it clear that these items in 6:6-9 are not simply about the laws but about the one who gives the laws.”²⁰

Additionally, he plainly states that each father is to personally be responsible, and to individualize that responsibility to his son. He states: “The first phrase of Deuteronomy 6:7, could be translated as follows: ‘And you shall repeat them to your sons and you shall talk about them.’”²¹ In the second half of Deuteronomy 6:7 it is quite evident that the instructions are given as to when the fathers are to teach the words to the sons, which is at all times. Hamilton gives no room for doubt concerning when the father is to discuss and teach his son. He is very direct in reiterating and explaining when fathers are to instruct their sons. He explains how when you rise, is at the end of the statement, which means that when a man rises from his sleep, he should take the opportunity to repeat and discuss God’s words with his sons. Then, at the end of the day, when you lie down to go to sleep, you repeat and discuss God’s words. “At the beginning and end of the day, and every

¹⁹ Hamilton, “The Coming Generation,” 11.

²⁰ Hamilton, “The Coming Generation,” 11.

²¹ Hamilton, “The Coming Generation,” 12.

opportunity throughout it, God's word is to be repeated, pondered, explored, explained, and celebrated.”²²

According to Rabbi David Sofian of Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio, the Shema is still practiced in the home today. Even though it is necessary in this doctoral project to give the children weekly lessons; Rabbi Sofian stresses the fact that their children are not taught in this manner. He says, “The children are taught by example. It is the way that the child grows up, twenty-four/seven by learning through the environment of their home as opposed to a particular lesson.”²³

It is therefore mandatory that parents who have faith in God start their children at the beginning of the day, to rise and give honor and praise to the Most High God, El-Elyon. By the same token, throughout the day, or when families come together in the evening, God's Word is to be ingrained upon the children's minds, and of course, when retiring for the night, prayers and homage to God should be a continuous way of life for all who trust in God. It is the Word of God that sustains us.

Rabbi Sofian elaborates further on how children are being taught now, in the Jewish faith, versus what was practiced in biblical times. This is a brief interview, due to the fact that this is the busiest season of high holidays with Rabbi Sofian, versus email: I asked the Rabbi if the majority of the people still teach their children in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:7, and if it is mandatory. He answered: “The idea of Jewish education for children is taken very seriously by our people. This is why we run a four hour plus a week religious school program on Sundays.”

²² Hamilton, “The Coming Generation,” 13.

²³ Rabbi David Sofian, interview by author, Dayton, June 9, 2014.

In answer to the question about special prayers in reference to the Shema, and then general prayers, Rabbi stated: “The Shema itself is a special prayer that everyone learns. Certainly people are free to add their personal prayers at any time. We have long traditions of a formal prayer book with prayers in it for nearly every occasion.” When asked if this way of teaching helps with the children’s behavior, Rabbi remarked, “The Shema can only help.”

In biblical times boys were taught away from home while girls stayed home and learned more about the upkeep of the home. Rabbi enlightens us on this subject. “Girls are taught the same as boys in our version of Judaism and Reform Judaism or Liberal Judaism.” He adds: “Virtually nothing is the same as it was in biblical times. Judaism underwent a radical change of development once the Temple, the Priesthood and the Sacrifices were ended by the Roman destruction. It led to Rabbinic Judaism which rethought everything in order to keep Judaism alive and to allow it to thrive in differing circumstances.” Rabbi Sofian wraps up the interview with this statement:

Our religious school includes a children’s service every Sunday morning as part of their studies. We want them to grow up with our services in the sanctuary. There is also a tradition of saying the Shema first thing in the morning and before you go to bed. So, for example; my daughter says the Shema with her daughters every night at bed time. That is a kind of devotional time. Other people do other things and I’m sure many do nothing at all in this regard. It depends on the family.²⁴

Nevertheless, God’s Word was given to the children in biblical times, and it is still being given today. The Bible was, is, and will continue to be important, and spoken to the children, morning, noon, and night. The Word of God and its teaching will be recited to the children, without ceasing, always and forever. In this twenty-first century, and in our

²⁴ Rabbi David, Sofian, interview by author, Dayton, September 22, 2014.

Gentile homes, teaching our children God's Word in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:5-7 should be an ongoing process.

Conclusion

The commandment of educating our children about God's Word, according to Deuteronomy 6:5-7 cannot ever be overemphasized. It is an order that goes beyond belief, to an accomplishment in rearing our children on a continual basis. Developing this theme even further, A. James Murphy shows how the commandment can be at the very center of family life.

Deut 6:7, along with Deut 6:20-25 stipulates that Israelite parents nurture and educate their children in the law, ensuring their protection and sustenance in the land God gifted them. Deut 6:7 also stipulates an educational technique that implies memorization of the law, suggesting a certain cognitive level. . . . The passage suggests intimacy for the child with her parent through language, security of the hearth, togetherness even when traveling, and proximity when at rest. Each component conveys the belongingness and security considered fundamental for healthy development.²⁵

Teaching our children (particularly when they are young), spiritual formation is a key factor in this project. As Rabbi Sofian stated above, teaching has to become more than just a practice, but a way of life for families. When children between the ages of two to five are first taught at home, and then are taught the Word through Christian education and the arts, at church the Biblical foundation is set for them to continue to learn and absorb all that they have been taught.

²⁵ A. James Murphy, "Children in Deuteronomy: The Partisan Nature of Divine Justice," *Journal of Biblical Interpretation* 20, no. 1-no. 2 (2012): 1, 9-10, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

New Testament Foundations

The New Testament foundational scripture for this doctoral study is Luke 18:15-17:

¹⁵ People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. ¹⁶ But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

This pericope with emphasis and focus on the sixteenth verse of Luke 18, continues to support the premise that children are qualified to be educated for and employed for acts of service in praise and worship. Children are special to Jesus, therefore, those who are very young, should be spiritually formed to serve in their congregation. Just as the children were being brought to Jesus in Luke 18:15-17, and Jesus accepted them; the children of Omega Baptist Church have been (and will continue to be) used for God’s glory.

In the New Testament pericope, Jesus wanted the children to be brought to him, but the disciples were against it. In his *Bible Commentary*, Warren W. Wiersbe comments on Luke 18:15-17:

It was customary for the Jews to bring little children to the rabbis to receive their special blessing, so it is strange that the disciples would stand in the way. Perhaps they thought Jesus was weary and needed rest, or they may have decided that He was not really interested in children. How wrong they were! ²⁶

The question then, is why the disciples did not want the children to come to Jesus? Perhaps the disciples had not yet tapped into Jesus’ understanding about the children. In the journal article, “Experiencing the Kingdom as a Little Child: A Rereading

²⁶ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 200.

of Mark 10:13-16,” another gospel telling of the story, the mention of the disciples’ actions is attributed to “a rhetorical strategy to challenge hearers of the Christian communities being addressed.”²⁷ This story suggests or points to how the disciples devalued children, and how Jesus felt about children. In so doing it challenges the church, then and now, to recognize that children, even small children, are instrumental to the Kingdom of God.

In his article, “Kingdoms, Kids, and Kindness: A New Context for Luke 18:15-17,” Ronald R. Clark Jr., poses another reason why the disciples did not accept the children, and did not deem it proper for the children to be brought to Jesus. It was not customary for children to be given any type of rights, particularly with someone of stature:

The attitudes of the apostles in the children passages seem to support the ancient near Eastern view of children. The disciples rebuke those presenting the children for Jesus to touch (Luke 18:15; Mark 10:13; Matt 19:13). Jesus rebukes the disciples and asks for the children to be permitted rather than hindered (Luke 18:16; Mark 10:14; Matt 19:14). The disciples’ attitude reflects a Near Eastern mind-set toward children.²⁸

It is therefore, quite evident from the way that Jesus took control of the situation that Jesus considered children valuable; it is reasonable to conclude, then, that we should treat them accordingly. According to Jesus, they are not to be shunned, ignored or left behind. Even adults are to become as children in order to enter into the Kingdom of God.

²⁷ James L. Bailey, “Experiencing the Kingdom as a Little Child: A Rereading of Mark 10:13-16,” *Word and World* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 59, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

²⁸ Ronald R. Clark, “Kingdoms, Kids, and Kindness: A New Context for Luke 18:15-17,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 5 (Fall 2002): 244, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

In Luke 18:9-14, in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector there is a connection of the incident of the children in 18:15-17. The remark that some people “despised others” (v9) is echoed in the disciples’ treatment of the children (v15b).²⁹ Children were often thought to be of little importance, but Jesus’ actions pointed to the fact that children were more important than the disciples could have imagined. The disciples were possibly looking out for Jesus’ welfare and trying to keep small children from bothering him. There were probably several families waiting and wanting to have Jesus touch and hold their children, for many reasons, but the disciples did not think it fitting or proper for the children to come to Jesus.

In the book, *Preaching the Gospel of Luke: Proclaiming God’s Royal Rule*, Keith F. Nickle gives his view on Luke 18:15-17, in the section titled, “Whom Does God Accept?” He considers the story of the Pharisees and the tax collectors and the story of the little children are next to each other to suggest that the disciples are similar to the Pharisees. Due to their dismissal of the children, they are considered to be arrogant, and possibly insignificant, no longer of interest to Jesus.³⁰

It is somewhat puzzling that the disciples could not understand Jesus’ concern for the children except for the fact that maybe they were more concerned about Jesus’ welfare than anyone else. Jesus’ focus was on the children and how important they are in relation to the Kingdom of God. In the book, *A Public and Political Christ*, Bart B. Bruehler, under the heading, “Jesus Develops His Movement of Disciples,” refers to the disciples in this manner: “Throughout the travel narrative, Jesus continues to teach them

²⁹ Jerome Kodell, “Luke and the Children: the Beginning and End of the Great Interpolation (Luke 9:46-56; 18:9-23),” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (1987): 415.

³⁰ Keith F. Nickle, *Preaching the Gospel of Luke: Proclaiming God’s Royal Rule* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 183-184.

about the nature of discipleship. Thus, Jesus gradually develops leaders and representatives within his movement of disciples from ch. 5 to ch. 18.” He also states, “The disciples were far from perfect (cf. 18:15-17).”³¹

In *Commanding Your Morning*, Dr. Cindy Trimm speaks out on the subject, “Let There Be Light:” “Jesus wanted the light to come on for his disciples. To teach complex spiritual principles He would use simple stories based on common subjects. Jesus would weave revolutionary spiritual truths into the fabric of each parable.”³² The disciples had evidently not been told how important the children are before this reference, for surely they would have allowed the children to come to Jesus. The disciples did not understand, or see the light at that time. After Jesus corrected them for not allowing the children to come, they saw the light and realized what Jesus meant as the analogy of the children to the Kingdom of God.

Though Nickle alludes to the fact that the disciples did not know how interested Jesus was in the children. Nevertheless, he goes deeper to reveal what he feels Jesus is truly saying in the section titled, “Jesus’ passionate preference for the little child in us all:”

Of course Jesus was interested in little children, more than the disciples knew. Their inability even to imagine that he might be interested said more about their relationship to Jesus than did their pompous posturing. Not only did Jesus countermand the disciples’ ill-considered prohibitions and summon small children to his side, he affirmed how eagerly he looked for the “little child” in all who would follow him and participate in the reassertion of God’s royal rule. He held the little children before the eyes of condescending adults as models for any who would be included in God’s realm. Kingdom people were people who knew and rejoiced in their complete dependency on the merciful goodwill and love of God. That anecdote has a special “bite” for Luke and his community for, by then, the terms “little children” and “little ones” had acquired a technical meaning referring

³¹ Bart B. Bruehler, *A Public and Political Christ: The Social-Spatial Characteristics of Luke 18:35-19:4 and the Gospel as a Whole in its ancient Context* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 339.

³² Cindy, Trimm, *Commanding Your Morning: Unleash the Power of God in Your Life* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2007), 10-11.

to new or recent converts to the gospel faith. They were those who were immature in the faith rather than simply the chronologically immature. . . .³³

According to Barbara Shellard, “Luke 18:15-17, ‘suffer little children’ pericope, (vv15-17) is considered to be part of Luke’s central section. Here, too, entry into the Kingdom, the theme of so much of the central section, is the real issue.”³⁴

There are other incidents where the disciples turned people away, which Wiersbe relates to, such as the hungry crowd in Matthew 14, and the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15. He states, “The twelve did not yet have the compassion of their Master, but it would come in due time.”³⁵ He ends this discourse by explaining how important it is to be childlike. “Jesus wants us to be childlike but not childish. An unspoiled child illustrates humility, faith, and dependence. A child has a sense of wonder that makes life exciting. The only way to enter God’s kingdom is to become like a child and be born again. . . .”³⁶

In Joel B. Green’s book, *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, in his section titled, “Jesus and the Marginalized,” how Jesus feels about children is emphasized. “In Jesus’ ministry, sinners are accepted. . . . Children, too, who occupied a low status indeed in the Roman world, were welcomed by Jesus (18:15-17).”³⁷

Jesus, gentle and humble in heart, had a heart for those who were considered to be outcast, or of low estate. Jesus went the extra mile, to acknowledge them and to give

³³ Nickle, *Preaching the Gospel of Luke*, 186-187.

³⁴ Barbara Shellard, *New Light on Luke: Its Purpose, Sources and Literary Context* (London, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 133.

³⁵ Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, 200.

³⁶ Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, 200.

³⁷ Joel B. Green, *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 89.

homage to those who were belittled. Children were often thought of in this manner, and were often pushed back, or ignored. Green expounds upon the Lukan view of others including children.

In the Third Gospel, “Gentiles” may be understood as members of a more encompassing category of persons generally understood to be outside the boundaries of divine graciousness. This list would include lepers, Samaritans, the sick, women, “sinners,” toll collectors, *children*, Gentiles, and others—that is, persons normally excluded from the religious circles of the pious but, in Luke’s depiction, welcome in the community of Jesus’ followers. . . .³⁸

Comments on Luke’s interpretation of Luke 18:15-17 are also given by Charles H. Talbert. “Luke describes what is involved in becoming a disciple and being found faithful when the Son of Man comes. Receiving the kingdom of God in a childlike manner in this context refers to humility . . . where humility means submission to God. Verses 15-17, then, offer an example of faith cast in the category of humility derived from the preceding contrast story. . . .” Talbert elaborates further on the true meaning of Jesus’ reference of becoming as a child:

If you think God is one who delights in the spiritually superior, then God, is not who you think he is. If you think God shuns the despicable sinner who has no one else to turn to, then God is not who you think he is. Why is this so? With the “I tell you” of v14a, Jesus claims to know God’s judgments and dares to say what God is like and how he acts. Jesus claims to know the mind of God.³⁹

Jesus being omniscient and the Son of God, undoubtedly knows all things. It is the mind of Christ that little children should come to Him. None are too small, or too young. To be Christ-like is, for us, to have the mind of Christ as well. We as adults are not to stop the children from coming to Jesus, for they are also welcome to come to Jesus. We must become humble as little children to receive the Kingdom of God.

³⁸ Green, *New Testament Theology*, 26.

³⁹ Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 201-202.

In *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible, Luke*, Justo L. Gonzalez gives his interpretation of Luke 18:15-17, which is entitled “The Children”:

Luke retells the story, which was already found in Mark, changing very little. The words of Jesus about little children are commonly interpreted as commending their innocence, their sweetness, and other such qualities. This is particularly true in our modern culture, where we tend to romanticize children, and forget that they too have the capacity to be obnoxious, spiteful; and so on. In the ancient world, people’s attitudes toward children were very different. They often considered children worthless and even disposable. In the Greco-Roman world, it was perfectly legal to abandon a child one did not wish to raise. Children were commonly seen as a source of family income in the future, and of security in old age—or as a way to pass on the family name and traditions. Children were excluded from most activities, and there were few institutions defending them. Thus the main point of the story is probably not that one has to become as innocent and sweet as little children, but that the kingdom of God belongs to people such as these infants, who seem to be of no importance.⁴⁰

Biblical foundations are crucial for children to develop at an early age. In the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus establishes the fact that young children are very important. Of the three Gospels the Luke passage even includes infants. Jesus allows the children to come to Him in order to lay hands on them and bless them. Jesus also gives the Biblical mandate on how people should receive the kingdom (as little children). Each of these gospels demonstrates how Jesus truly felt about children.

Clark analyzes the phrase “like a child” in his journal article, “Kingdoms, Kids, and Kindness.” The phrase “like a child,” however suggests that there is even more to the message Jesus is sharing in His acceptance of the children that day. He introduces his discussion by saying.

The passages concerning children and the kingdom of God have been interpreted by various scholars to indicate a need for humility or child-likeness (Matt 18-16; 19:13-15; Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-16; Luke 9:46-48; 18:15-17). Humility, simplicity, purity, and trust are themes suggested in this interpretation. When viewed in

⁴⁰ Justo L. Gonzalez, *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible: Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 2010.

Luke's context of social justice, this kingdom/child story suggests a different interpretation. The use of (*hos paidion*, "as a child") as a comparative clause, the attitudes concerning children and the context of the texts suggest that this is another lesson about social justice.⁴¹

Through this expanded interpretation, Jesus acceptance of children is revolutionary. The most prominent thought to be explored in relation to the children is that we are to humble ourselves as little children.

Synoptic Study of the Texts

In the other relative synoptic gospels and particularly in our focused text, Luke 18:15-17, the key or message that Jesus establishes in this gospel is, *humility*: The exhortation for us all to become as little children, and not be an offender is apparent. Offenses do come, but let us as adults or parents not be the one who cause the offense. It is how we handle those offenses that come our way that makes the difference in our lives. We as adults can oftentimes take lessons from young children. They have a way of teaching us how to be more gentle and demure, if we allow them to do so. Some of them, readily exhibit Christ-likeness, and portray our humble servant Jesus Christ. Clark shows that it was through children that Jesus addressed the issue of humility by associating with and guiding the humble of society. Receiving Jesus and the Father, is the theme most common to the three synoptic texts.⁴²

In the second story (Matt 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17), it was obvious that the disciples were forbidding or stopping the children from coming to Jesus. The key word or message: We are to follow Jesus and His teachings. The disciples were

⁴¹ Clark, "Kingdoms, Kids, and Kindness," 239.

⁴² Clark, "Kingdoms, Kids, and Kindness," 238.

taught in the first story to have humility, and be as a child to enter God's Kingdom. In the second story they seemed to have forgotten, or did not understand what Jesus taught before, about being as a child. Jesus had given a command that the disciples were to let the children come. Of the three texts, the most common theme of all that Clark gives is, Jesus, in the imperative (*aphete*), commands/exhorts the disciples to let children come to him.⁴³

The children are the main focus in the Lukan pericope, however the parents, guardians, grandparents, (adults) role is also a major factor because they are instrumental in bringing the children to the Lord. Previously, it was mentioned that in Luke 18:15-17, the parents were bringing infants to the Lord to be blessed. They are raising the children from their earliest moments to seek Jesus.

Infants and Small Children

As the New Testament scripture specifies, the families were taking their children up to Jesus for Him to touch them, even *infants*. The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible specifically points out several times, the fact that the children were *little*:

"Jesus' disciples are to welcome little children . . . in his own name, following his example. Jesus becomes indignant when the disciples try to prevent people from bringing little children to him. Jesus exemplifies his humility by taking a little child to himself, signifying his serving the needs of the least and becoming last of all and servant of all."⁴⁴

In the Anchor Bible, "Children in Luke," a description is given of Luke's gospel as it relates to children:

⁴³ Clark, "Kingdom, Kids, and Kindness," 239.

⁴⁴ NIB s.v. *Children in the NT*.

Luke could well be called the “gospel of little children.” The stories of Jesus’ birth and childhood introduce central motifs found later in that gospel. . . . Luke’s gospel is unique in having a special journey section. He introduces it previously to the focused pericope, by focusing on children as the model for the new teachings on discipleship that he will present. J. Kodell (1987) has studied the literary children’s framework in the journey section and has shown how Luke teaches through opposing pairs based on the model of children and little ones. The closing children’s story is near the end of Luke’s journey section (18:15-17). Here the emphasis lies on receiving the Kingdom as a child (18:15-17).⁴⁵

What is relative to infants or small children in the focused text? How can infants come forth and be a part of God’s Kingdom when they are unable to offer anything in the church other than just being there? Gonzalez gives an interpretation of the meaning associated with infants and small children.

How we interpret this passage has much to do with where we place ourselves within the story. Obviously, we would like to place ourselves in the role of the little children, and that is a legitimate goal. But when we claim that our role is that of the little children we are coming perilously close to the Pharisee in the parable. Perhaps we would do better to consider the possibility that we might be like those who were bringing the little children. This has often been, and still is, the great temptation of the church and of the faithful. Just as we are tempted to boast of our piety, like the Pharisee, so are we tempted to set rules, regulations, and standards that effectively keep people away from the church and from its Lord. Churches in every city are surrounded by people who are almost as vulnerable as infants—unemployed people, people who have never known anything but violence, homeless people, people without proper immigration papers. We do not openly say we do not want them. We simply set up systems, standard, practices, and expectations that exclude them. By our clothing we hinder those who cannot dress as we do. By our liturgies we hinder those who did not grow up in the church. Yet, we like it or not, it is to such that the Kingdom of God belongs.⁴⁶

In the article, “Little Children Come to Jesus,” Dr. Ralph F. Wilson exegetes “Bringing Babies to the Master” The parents surely wanted Jesus to touch their children, and bless them. In order to give a true meaning of the passage, Wilson uses four Greek translations. 1. *Hapto* means to touch, to make close contact, to be blessed, to hold or

⁴⁵ David Noel Freedman, ed. in chief, *The Anchor Bible* (New York, NY: Doubleday Dell, 1991), 906-907.

⁴⁶ Gonzales, *Belief*, 215-216.

heal. 2. *Brephos* means babies, infant, and a very small child. 3. *Paidion* means a child normally below the age of puberty, child used of boys and girls. 4. *Pais*, of which *paidion* is a diminutive, the general word for child.⁴⁷

According to the *World Biblical Commentary* under the title, “Entering the Kingdom of God like a Child”,

Jesus welcomes infants and challenges all to receive the preaching of the Kingdom of God in a childlike manner. Luke makes the Markan point yet more extreme by changing “children,” into, babies (infants). . . . It is best to think that parents were bringing their infants to be blessed by this high-profile religious figure. . . . The word “touch” is what Luke elsewhere means by this verb, and it is likely to be the physical contact with Jesus that is thought to be beneficial to the infants.⁴⁸

Infants according to Luke were meaningful in exhibiting what Jesus wished to display as God’s Kingdom. In the Lukan version, the disciples seemed to be more upset due to infants being brought to Jesus. It was as if the disciples felt that the people had gone too far in taking the liberty to bring the smallest children. “The disciples are offended and see their own self-importance being undermined by this kind of casual access to Jesus.”⁴⁹ The disciples had yet to receive the understanding that children are special to Jesus that they are to accept the children, and allow the parents to bring them to Jesus. They still did not realize that they are to be as these children, who have a place in the Kingdom of God.

“Though Jesus will be no romantic about children, somewhere among their willingness to trust, freedom from hypocrisy or pretension, conscious weakness, and

⁴⁷ Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, “#79. Little Children Come to Jesus (Luke 18:15-17) Jesus Walk: Disciple Lessons From Luke’s Gospel, Joyful Heart Ministries,” accessed, September 15, 2014, <http://www.jesuswalk.com/luke/>.

⁴⁸ John Holland, *World Biblical Commentary*, 35B: *Luke 9:21-18:34* (USA: Word, 1993), 881.

⁴⁹ John Holland, *World Biblical Commentary*, 881.

readiness for dependence, Jesus finds those qualities that are essential for entry into the Kingdom of God.”⁵⁰

We, as people of God must therefore, stop hindering the children from being a part of God’s Kingdom in our churches, do as the Word of God exemplifies, and as Jesus bids us to do. Christ set an example of the acceptance of even the smallest children into God’s Kingdom. Jesus himself was taught as a child, and in turn taught others. Jesus exemplified how important children are, and commanded that children, even infants, are not to be hindered from being a part of the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

The old and new testament scriptures which have been discussed in this chapter show that it is the responsibility of adults (parents, preachers, teachers, leaders and elders) to teach young people God’s Word, and that even the very young were valued by Jesus, and therefore we, too, should recognize their importance.

Children need to be taught the way of the Lord through teaching that starts at home, as is noted in the Shema in Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 6:1-7). It is amazing how small children, (infants) have been used in God’s Kingdom in the days of antiquity, and throughout generations.

In addition, children are welcome to come unto Jesus. In Luke 18:15-17 is a vibrant image for a healthy church of today; young children, joyfully being introduced to the Word of God

⁵⁰ Holland, *World Biblical Commentary*, 882.

Ronald Clark ended his article with an application to ministry. I consider this statement to be an outstanding truth:

The early church was called to transform society. Outcasts were to be protected and given hope through the kingdom. Children . . . on the margins of society were part of this group. . . . We must seek to *receive* children as Jesus did in His ministry.⁵¹

Today, we are not in ancient Israel studying the Shema; however, we are a people of God and part of God's Kingdom; the principle is still the same. We as Christians still follow the statutes and laws of God and are under the Dispensation of Grace. In our churches, we follow God's plan, to the best of our ability, and live accordingly to the Word of God. We empower our children as we prepare them to be spiritually ready for Christian Service through Christian Education, Worship and the Arts. "Jesus broke with the expectations of his day by inviting children into his ministry and mission—indeed, into the kingdom of God. Churches today must do the same, celebrating and including children rather than relegating them to the fringes of their worship."⁵²

The children of today, of this twenty-first century, must be no exception in serving the Lord.

⁵¹ Clark, "Kingdom, Kids and Kindness," 248.

⁵² Tim Coltvett, "Jesus' Prophetic Reach: Drawing Children to the Center of Congregational Life," *Word & World* 33, no. 3 (Summer 2013):288, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This Historical Foundations paper will delve into the historical aspects of teaching children through worship and the arts. It will offer a historical survey concerning instilling within children sound doctrine by utilizing the Word of God, which in turn prepares them to serve in their congregations, homes, and wherever God calls them. Since music is a major part of worship and the arts within the church this essay will focus mainly on the place of music in the church through history.

Church Music has continuously evolved from era to era. Therefore, the history of four different eras, Early Church Music, Church Music of the Medieval Period, Church Music of the Reformation Period, and the History of Church Music in the 18th and 19th centuries will be presented. The different genres which have been encountered during the specific time periods will also be discussed.

The section on early church music history (the first to the eighth centuries) will identify the different genres, and styles of music that were practiced in the church. It will also, demonstrate how controversial the subject of church music was, and how it was used, particularly in the worship services of the early church.

The medieval period is also known as the “Middle Ages.” The word medieval can be translated as meaning “the time in between.” According to one source, the medieval

period was from approximately 500-1450 A. D., which was a time of heavy church influence in all Western society.¹ Very little is known about the music in this time period, because only church music was important enough to write down, and only a tiny bit of that has survived.²

The historical period which comes after the medieval, or middle ages, is known as the Renaissance or Reformation period. There are two main types of Renaissance, or Reformation music: church music or 'sacred' music and non-church or secular music." The Renaissance represents the dawn of a new prosperous era, meaning "new birth." Musically it was a time to flourish. Music was moving toward the major and minor scales we use today. Also rhythms were much smoother.³ Forms of art, especially music, were continuously in a transitional mode. By the sixteenth century a Christian Reformation affecting the whole of Europe had begun. The church, its music and liturgy, was on the brink of a profound transformation.⁴

After the reformation, congregational hymn singing became the way of singing for most Protestant Christian worship services. The last era discussed in this historical document covers the history of church music in the 18th and 19th centuries, of which hymnal music is most prominent. In addition, several historical church figures who have been known for their service in the church will be presented. These have embraced music

¹ Education Portal, "What is Medieval Music?-History, Church and Composer," accessed October 17, 2014, <http://education-portal.com/academylesson/what-is-medieval-music-history-church-music-composers.html#lesson>.

² Cultureonline, "Medieval Music," Soundjunction (2005) accessed October 17, 2014, <http://www.soundjunction.org/medievalmusic.aspa?NodeID=173>.

³ Cultureonline, "Medieval Music."

⁴ Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel an Authoritative Illustrated Guide to All the Major Traditions of Music for Worship* (Oxford, England: Lion Publishing, 1992), 58.

in their era. Some of them have been taught the Word by devoted parents, who have utilized, or in some way have been influenced through the medium of the arts.

Early Church Music History

The history of early church music can be one of the most varied subjects that can ever be addressed. Music as a whole is very transitional, and complex, particularly in the first three centuries, and before Constantine (d. 337).⁵ Christians of the first century usually did not celebrate worship without music, as we sometimes do today in contemporary methods of worshipping our Lord and Savior. Therefore, in the early church, song was somewhat synonymous with worship. In the introduction of the journal article on the history of early church music, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship: Background and Early Evidence," Chrysostom Nassis reveals how music has always been a part of worship. He states, "Practically all services in the Orthodox Church were sung. . . . Singing was from the beginning a constitutive element of Christian worship."⁶ There was, however, a great deal of controversy concerning the use of instrumental music in the church.

To get a perception of instrumental usage, the history of its usage is necessary to explain. Edward Foley gives a description of the particular instruments that were used prior to Christianity:

While there are at least nineteen identifiable terms for musical instruments in the First Testament, not all of these instruments were regularly used in Temple

⁵ Edward Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music: The Music of Pre-Constantinian Christianity, American Essays in Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 5.

⁶ Chrysostom Nassis, "The Use of Music in Christian Worship: Background and Early Evidence," *Journal of Phronema* 22 (2007): 23, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

worship. Some, like the *hazozerah* (trumpet), were frequently employed in Temple worship and “the sounding of the trumpet was to be the duty and privilege of the Aaronite priests who exercised it both in war (2 Chr 13:12) and in sacred ceremonies (Num 10:8). . . .” In general, one can suggest that instrumental music in the second temple was limited to trumpet flourishes; a large body of stringed instruments and a small number (or even single pair) of cymbals. Instruments seem to have played an even more reduced role in the music of the first Temple.⁷

There are several references made concerning musical instruments and whether or not they were used in the early church. In the article, “Sing and Make Melody: Church History Timeline” Diane Severance informs us that some of the church fathers considered musical instruments to be inappropriate, and recommended that religious songs should replace instruments and secular songs in the house. Since musical instruments were used in pagan sacrifices and the Jewish temple worship, some people would not use them in public worship.⁸

An article by William Woodson on “History of Instrumental Music” in the New Testament History” also alludes to the fact that musical instruments were not used in the early church. Woodson gives religious history, from the close of the New Testament until the present. He speaks on the findings: “Instrumental music in worship within churches professing to serve Christ did not emerge until hundreds of years after the close of the New Testament.”⁹

Further information on instrumental music is given by Foley through the history of synagogue worship. “The only instrument that was used in synagogue worship was the

⁷ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 39-40.

⁸ Diane Severance, “Sing and Make Melody: AD 1-300 Church History Timeline,” Christianity.com, accessed November 5, 2014, <http://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1-300/sing-and-make-melody-to-god-11629579.html>.

⁹ William Woodson, “History of Instrumental Music: New Testament History,” accessed November 5, 2014, <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1271-history-of-instrumental-music>.

shofar. Singing or worshiping in the early church did not originate with the followers of Jesus, but with the rabbis who effectively prohibited the use of instrumental music in Jewish worship until the nineteenth century.”¹⁰ As we know from reading the Scriptures, Paul called musical instruments lifeless (I Cor 14:7-8), he urged Christians to worship and sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

In the first and second centuries after the destruction of the Temple, (70 AD) the Jews became a scattered race of people. The Jewish people held small services in synagogues, where instrumental music had come to an end. “Interestingly, singing appears to have developed further.”¹¹ As a matter of fact, a new way of singing had evolved, which was entirely vocal; there was no instrumentation. In this period, Davidic psalms were being sung in Christian gatherings, as well as Jewish worship using Christian musical forms, such as hymnodic psalmody, and metrical hymnody. During the second and third centuries, worship took place in what were known as church houses. Specific houses were used for Christian worship, which became the only way for community worship. It was during this time period, that Christianity emerged as a recognizable religion.¹²

In explanation of what the early church did sing, William S. Smith in “Who Sang What?” expounds upon the song of the early church. He gives credit to the late authority of the music of the ancient and the medieval church, James W. McKinnon, for being correct. He tells us, “Practices varied from time to time and place to place. The origins of

¹⁰ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 80.

¹¹ Theodore W. Burgh, “Music,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Me-R, 5 vols., ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfield (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 4: 173.

¹² Nassis, “The Use of Music,” 26; Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 91-92.

Christian song are extremely difficult to trace.”¹³ This, therefore, explains why there is so much mystery concerning the music of the early church.

This question could easily be posed, “If the church’s practice of psalmody derives from neither synagogue nor temple, how did it come into being? Smith gives an explanation of the origins of Christian psalmody, which the church at this time is practicing, even though the church is overwhelmingly Gentile. Smith gives five points relative to Christian Psalmody:

1. What the church did receive from Judaism was, above all else, a body of Scripture that from the outset, the church made its own. The largest book in this scripture was the favorite book of the Jews and became the favorite book to the church: Psalms. Into the sacred writings the church added to those it had inherited from Judaism, the church incorporated more from Psalms than from any other book.
2. Psalms is a treasury of lyrical religious poetry inviting singers to give voice to it.
3. Time after time psalms testify specifically to “song” and exhort to “sing.”
4. The church understood the psalms to [be] about Christ: in them Christ himself sings. This hermeneutic, common already in the New Testament, was vigorously carried forward by Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr (d. Rome, (165) in his *Dialog with Trypho [the Jew]* and Tertullian. Not only do psalms speak about Christ; in the psalms Christ *himself* may be heard speaking. . . .
5. Most important, this book of Scripture came to the church clearly labeled: “Psalms” (*Psalmoi*), that is, “Songs.” Further, many of the superscriptions of individual psalms identify those psalms as a *mitzmor* LXX *psalmos*)—a “Psalm” (meaning “Song”), “Song” (ode), or a “Hymn” (*hymnos*). The psalmody of the church is *sui generis* [Latin, for unique, or of its own kind].

In the early part of the third century, the African writer, Tertullian (160-225 AD) describes Christian worship as he testifies: “After manual ablution, and the bringing in of lights, each one is asked to stand forth and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from the Holy Scriptures or one of his own composing.”¹⁴

¹³ William S. Smith, “Who Sang What?” *Worship* 88, no. 1 (January 2014): 45.

¹⁴ Nassis, “The Use of Music,” 30.

Music was, and still is continuously changing. In the third century, music in the church evolved to a higher level of a pomp and circumstance like genre, which was in a more defined, dignified liturgical style. Uses and forms of music displayed in this century are elaborated upon by Nassis:

The peace of Constantine brought with it the conditions suitable for the development of the liturgical arts. Christian music became formal and public. It was celebrated in the great basilicas modeled on imperial court buildings and under the leadership of bishops who were now also officials of the Empire.¹⁵

There are two forms of singing in Church which became apparent by this time (from the end of the fourth century), antiphonal hymnody and responsorial psalmody, [call and response].¹⁶

In the fifth century congregational singing became more prevalent. This change brought concern to some who felt that the cantor should sing more, and the congregation should sing less. According to Foley, there is no evidence of a designated cantor for the New Testament period. In the synagogues of today, cantors still sing, but it has not been verified that this practice was carried over from synagogue music, into the New Testament Church.¹⁷

In the sixth-century Pope Gregory I (who reigned from 590-604) was instrumental in introducing a new way of singing, known as Gregorian chant, which was influential to the western church for the next millennium.

The Gregorian Chant or plainsong was characterized by a lack of harmony or polyphony; there was only the melodic line. There were no strict time values, and no musical instruments were used. The effect produced had a resonant mystical,

¹⁵ Nassis, "The Use of Music," 30.

¹⁶ Nassis, "The Use of Music," 32.

¹⁷ Foley, *Foundations of Christian Music*, 95 and 104.

other-worldly quality. Only men were allowed to sing; this was music for the priests and the choir, not the congregation.¹⁸

In the seventh century, plainchant was started in the monasteries. Plainchanting or monophonic singing was thought to be holier and more reverent, which would allow the chanter to refrain from using too much emotion, so that concentration would be on God. “St. Basil considers chant not only as a mere concession of the Holy Spirit for human weakness but a potent tool useful for the education of one’s soul. . . .”¹⁹

In the eighth century, singers became trained so that they could sing correctly, and precisely. Musicians were taught how to notate music. They were taught how to read the notes, which enabled them to play and sing the right notes.

Conclusion

So, before the destruction of the Temple, in 70 AD, music was fundamental in the Temple. As the Bible denotes, instruments were readily used during worship. After the destruction of the Temple, music evolved in a totally new way. This new way of singing consisted of musical forms known as hymnodic psalmody, and metrical hymnody. The early Christian church worshipped by singing, without the use of instruments. The use of instruments was prevalent in pagan rituals and ceremonies, therefore, Christians refused to use instruments, in order to keep themselves from being sinful, like the pagans.

Music in the early church consisted of simple singing. The early Christians sang songs using or imitating the psalms, which were related to David, who was known as the psalmist. However, as the fourth and fifth centuries emerged, different styles and genres

¹⁸ Severance, “Sing and Make Melody,” 2.

¹⁹ Nassis, “The Use of Music,” 32.

were introduced into the music of the Christian church and its way of worshipping. Each century seemed to bring a different style and genre as the church continued to evolve in its way of worshipping the Lord through music.

Even though music was continuously changing and controversial, in the early church, music continued whether it was chanted, played on instruments, or sung. The scriptures tell us that God sang, (Zeph 3:17). And the early church understood the Psalms to be Christ's song; therefore, singing can be said to be exemplified by the Savior; but church music is modified many times as the early church evolves.

Medieval Church Music

Early to Mid-Medieval Church Music (500 A.D. to 1450 A.D.)

As the middle-ages began, the use and creation of music was regulated by the church. This time period's music was known as early medieval church music. The church was singing plainchant, or Gregorian chant, named after Pope Gregory I. The music was monophonic, meaning it was one melody without harmony, without any background singers or instruments (a cappella).²⁰ In giving credence to Pope Gregory's influence on the music presented in the early medieval period, this statement was made. "He was considered a promoter of monks, an important biblical exegete, and the most prolific Roman writer of this period. Pope Gregory contributed much to shape the intellectual world in which Roman chant developed."²¹

²⁰ Education Portal, "What is Medieval Music?".

²¹ Sean Gallagher, et al., *Western Plainchant in the First Millennium: Studies in the Medieval Liturgy and its Music* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 83.

A transition was taking place in church music during the mid-medieval era. The earliest attempts at notation of the chants were written in books at the end of the ninth century. “These were nuances, dots and accents written above the text but with no indication of rhythm or pitch at first. Then charts began appearing on four-staff lines.”²² New songs were continuously being created. Musicians were learning how to read and write music, instead of singing by ear. Music began to be widely notated for the first time, enabling choirs to sing from music. Thus, new types of music could be created which would have been quite out of the reach of traditions where music was passed on by ear.²³

In big churches, and at large cathedrals, like Notre Dame in Paris, songs that combined two or more lines sung simultaneously were being introduced.²⁴ “Around the year 900, some simple harmony of two vocal parts was allowed. This was possibly because singing one part all of the time is boring or because some monks couldn’t sing in tune.”²⁵

This new way of singing, was the result of music theorists in the Church, experimenting with the idea of singing two melodic lines simultaneously at parallel intervals, usually at the fourth, fifth, or octave. This way of singing resulted in a hollow-

²² Michael Delahoyde, “Medieval Music: Chant,” accessed October 17, 2014, <http://public.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/medieval/chant.html>.

²³ Ed Stetzer, “Church Music Conflicts,” accessed November 5, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/may/church-music-conflicts.html?paging=off>.

²⁴ Cultureonline, “Medieval Music.”

²⁵ Education Portal, “What is Medieval Music?”

sounding music called organum, which very slowly developed over the next one hundred years.²⁶

According to Barbara Jeskalian, a particular composer, Hildegard of Bingen, who wrote mid-medieval music deserves recognition and intense examination. Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179), was a German nun who wrote over seventy works of plainchant. She is known for writing songs that were uncharacteristically melodic for the time period.²⁷

Jeskalian elaborates on Hildegard's achievements:

In this century, and more particularly in this decade, [1140-1150] a woman who was a composer as well as a poet, a painter of miniatures, a visionary, a diplomat, a physician, a philosopher, and the abbess of a Benedictine monastery would be considered, at the very least, a not usual sort of person.²⁸

Hildegard entered the monastic life of Disibodenberg as a young girl, in order to fulfill the tithe offering that her parents had made to God. She was their tenth and last child.²⁹ Hildegard was eight years old when she became the student and companion of Jutta, a girl of fourteen who had vowed herself to God and virginity. Hildegard started communing with God and acting differently than most children at a very young age. Hildegard writes this statement: "In my third year of age, I saw so great a light that my soul trembled, but, because I was an infant, I could not convey anything about it." She was prophetic as a small child and knew and accepted her calling as a Toddler. "Though never trained in musical composition, Hildegard wrote over 150 songs, mysteriously

²⁶ IPL2, "Music History 102: A Guide to Western Composers and their Music from the Middle Ages to the Present," accessed November 5, 2014, <http://www.pl.org/div/mush/middle/>.

²⁷ Education Portal, "What is Medieval Music?"

²⁸ Barbara J. Jeskalian, "Hildegard of Bingen: Her Times and Music" *Anima* 10, no. 1 (Fall 1983):

7.

²⁹ Jeskalian, "Hildegard of Bingen," 8.

beautiful and fiercely difficult to sing, that have been preserved to this day. She believed her music was inspired by God.”³⁰

According to Jeskalian, Hildegard’s music was of unearthly beauty. With the rich atmosphere of Benedictine tradition, Hildegard composed her songs accordingly, translating her inner experience into music. By the end of the eleventh century, quicker notes were being sung on one vocal line while another musical line had slower notes.³¹ Another transition in music was on the horizon.

Late Medieval Church Music

In the late medieval period, by the late 1100s, church music was becoming more and more polyphonic. In music, polyphony is a texture of two or more simultaneous lines of independent melody, as opposed to music with just one voice, (monophony). French composers are generally credited with composing the first significant polyphonic church music and creating plausible guidelines for composing polyphonic music. “The French composer Leonin of the Notre Dame Cathedral, and his student, Perotin, are generally credited with composing the significant polyphonic church music and creating plausible guidelines for composing polyphonic music. Both composers added more vocal parts and developed rhythmic notation into measurable notes.”³²

By the eleventh century, one, two (and much later, even three) added melodic lines were no longer moving in parallel motion, but contrary to each other, sometimes even crossing. The original chant melody was then sung very slowly

³⁰ Margaret Donsbach, “Hildegard of Bingen: A Music of Light,” accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.historicalnovels.info/Hildegard-of-Bingen.html>.

³¹ Jeskalian, “Hildegard of Bingen,” 11.

³² Education Portal, “What is Medieval Music?”

on long held notes called the tenor (from the Latin *tenere*, meaning to hold) and the added melodies wove about and embellished the resulting drone.³³

There was another kind of popular religious music, at this time period called a motet, in which each of the vocal lines could have its own words-so you could have three texts going at once, sometimes in different languages.³⁴

Conclusion

The music of the medieval period was changed drastically from Pope Gregory I in the ninth century to the composers of the twelfth century. It went from the songs of plainchant to harmony; from unison singing, to group singing.

St. Hildegard, a true worshipper and devotee to God, composed songs that were of a more melodic nature while the French composers such as, Leonin and Perotin contributed to a new genre of music that combined music for two or more simultaneously sounding voices, known as polyphonic music.

With the end of the late medieval period, reformation of rigid forms of worshiping, preaching and most of all singing, and the way music was exhibited in the church was on its way as new ways of thinking rocked the Christian world.

³³ IPL2, "Music History 102."

³⁴ Cultureonline, "Medieval Music."

Church Music of the Reformation Period

Music in the first half of the Sixteenth Century

In the sixteenth century, particularly, 31 October 1517, Martin Luther (1483-1546), an Augustinian monk of Wittenberg challenged the Roman Church by posting ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle. With the, then recent, invention of the printing press, the content of the theses became widespread. Martin's reading of the apostle Paul, and Augustine of Hippo, and above all, his own personal experience convinced him utterly that no one could earn righteousness in God's sight; faith in Christ and repentance were the only route.³⁵ Martin Luther had a profound effect on all aspects of church life, which included music. He spent his life teaching, preaching, writing theological treatises, works of religious instructions, hymns and chorales.³⁶

It is important, however, to note that Luther was preceded by another reformer with strong opinions concerning music. John Wycliffe, an Oxford scholar and theologian, offered vigorous challenges to the abuses of the Roman Church. He criticized the church both for its wealth and for its doctrinal errors. He thought that Christian music's elaborate traditions were divisive and vainglorious. Wycliffe was definitely a forerunner of Reformation of music. However, Luther was the one who initiated the transformation of the way the church worshipped as a whole.

A&E Television Networks explains how Luther's 95 sparked a revolution:

His "95 Theses . . ." propounded two central beliefs—that the Bible is the central religious authority and that humans may reach salvation only by their faith and

³⁵ Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music*, 58 and 60.

³⁶ H.G. Koenigsberger, *Luther: A Profile* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1973), xxi.

not by their deeds. . . . Although these ideas had been advanced before, Martin Luther codified them at a moment in history ripe for religious reformation. The Catholic Church was ever after divided, and the Protestantism that soon emerged was shaped by Luther's ideas. His writings changed the course of religious and cultural history in the West.³⁷

Luther's boldness in persisting against practices that he believed were not Christ-like also brought about reform in sixteenth century church music, throughout Europe, and eventually the world. The following countries, to name a few, reformed their music of psalms and hymns because of Luther's influence: France, published the first Genevan Psalter in 1539. In England, the Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter was published in 1539, and then it was published in North America in 1562.³⁸

Luther was not only a monk and scholar, but had multiple talents that contributed to his many influences on the Lutheran Reformation. Since he was an Augustinian monk, he knew the power of prayer. He was a competent trained singer, lutenist, hymn writer, and composer, knowledgeable in the polyphonic style of the times. Likened to the ancient Greeks, Luther knew how powerful music was for good and otherwise.³⁹ "Luther made it clear that music and other forms of artistic expressions were useful and necessary tools to further the message of Reformation."⁴⁰

³⁷ History.com, "Martin Luther and the 95 Theses," A&E Networks, 2009, accessed October 18, 2014, <http://www.history.com/topics/martin-luther-and-the-95-theses>.

³⁸ Frank Ezinger, "Reformed Church Music," accessed November 5, 2014, <http://www.churchmusic.ca/BOP4>, html.

³⁹ Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music*, 60.

⁴⁰ J. Andreas Lowe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing? Lutherans, Music, and the Gospel in the First Century of the Reformation," *Church History* 82, no.1 (March 2013): 69, assessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*, 88.

He valued everything about God, which included the combination of music and message, singing, preaching and praising. A central part of his Reformation was the deliberate promotion of music and music-making.⁴¹

Luther had a different viewpoint on music than those of the middle ages. Instead of choosing to be somber, and nonchalant, singing in a passive way, Loewe tells of Luther's passion for music, which includes its many and great uses.

Like no other art or academic discipline, music was able to sway human emotions and "rule over the feelings of the human heart." Indeed, it was so powerful and mighty that it could overcome and rule human beings in the same way that their masters do. Reflecting on David soothing Saul's anger by playing the harp Certainly, its emotional impact was such that it was able to make the sad joyful, the joyful sad, the timid brave and the proud humble.⁴²

Luther understood that all people, of all walks of life were to share a common hymnody. It did not matter from whence they came; singing and music was to be proclaimed by all. According to Loewe, music extended even further than just the act of singing. It was used for pedagogy, particularly in a private setting, and for devotions of individuals and households.

Martin Luther regarded music as a crucial instrument to communicate the Gospel and the Reformation message. . . . A review of contemporary records from the second decade of the sixteenth century to the turn of the seventeenth century enables the assessment of the role music played as an educational and theological tool in the life of Lutheran communities. . . .⁴³

From the conception of the Reformation, music was used to improve literacy, to give meaningful understanding to scriptures, and to advance evangelical learning, particularly among the young. Students in Lutheran schools were taught to sing psalms and spiritual

⁴¹ Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 69-70.

⁴² Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 71.

⁴³ Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 69.

songs, which fostered their reading skills, and enabled them to recall Reformation teachings.⁴⁴

Music in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century

In the initial months when Luther and his colleagues were writing their earliest hymns, the reformer created a new genre that was to have enormous significance for congregational participation in reformation churches: the psalm-hymn, or metrical psalm.⁴⁵

There was a significant growth in music education in the time between Luther's death in 1546 and the turn of the seventeenth century. Music education for children from all social strata was established in Reformation Germany. All children, even those children who worked, were to learn to read and write, which would enable them to become more educated, to be brought up as Christians, and to be taught the singing of Psalms.⁴⁶ Luther believed in the aptitude of children, and how they can absorb information. He stated, "Everybody learns from students, without any trouble or effort. Therefore, the masses will also learn from the students what, when and how to sing in church. . . ."⁴⁷ Singing is such a great tool to learn God's Word, and to retain it. Luther used the children to establish this fact, and to get it across to parents.

⁴⁴ Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 77.

⁴⁵ Robin A. Leaver, "Hymnody in Reformation Churches: An Overview of the Primary Historical Contours," *Liturgical Ministry* 4 (Fall 1995): 154, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

⁴⁶ Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 79-80.

⁴⁷ Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 80.

In his conclusion, Loewe let it be known that Luther had influenced people from all walks of life, throughout the globe, the necessity of singing as a formulation of learning God's Word, and teaching it so that God's Word can be proclaimed, retained, and maintained.

Luther had made it clear, toward the end of the first decade of the Reformation, that music and other artistic expressions were not only useful, but necessary instruments to further the message of the Reformation. In his 1526 *Deutsche Messe*, the need to communicate the Word of God was linked to "simple folk and the young" with the work of education and the arts.⁴⁸

For the sake of simple folk and the young, Scripture and the Word of God ought to be taught and practiced daily, that people may get used to Scripture; may know, understand and inhabit it, so that they may defend their beliefs and, over time, may teach others and thus further the reign of Christ."⁴⁹

There is little doubt that the Reformation is still central to worship in the Protestant denominations that trace their cultural and doctrinal heritage to Martin Luther. His love of music, and the vision that he had of music conveying an ideal sense of God's nature and being, is still an inspiration to composers and singers today in using their art in serving God and their communities.⁵⁰

What Luther was to German, Calvin was to French with very different results. In the French-speaking communities, an imposing figure of reform was Jean Calvin. Calvin was a highly-trained French refugee lawyer, who arrived in Geneva in 1536. Calvinist did not like Luther's folk-melody music. The use of singing in harmony and instrumentation

⁴⁸ Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 88.

⁴⁹ Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 88.

⁵⁰ Loewe, "Why Do Lutherans Sing?", 89.

was forbidden, but he did understand the power of music. For Calvin and his followers this was expressed in singing the Psalms. In Calvin's rule, the church leadership was elected by and from its congregations, without any references to Rome.

Calvin insisted upon the singing of the psalms, for he saw the power that music had on moving human hearts. He felt that the music had to be correct with a one-note-per-syllable fashion, without any musical harmony or accompaniment, which might distract the faithful, and be displeasing to God. Unison and nothing else was acceptable in church.⁵¹

Conclusion

Other reformers like Ulrich Zwingli and John Knox did not have much influence on the use of music among the Protestants. Indeed, while there were many different figures of reform, with varied practices of reformation, Martin Luther is the major figure in the process of transforming the use of music in Christian worship. The Roman Catholic Church, sang polyphonically, Martin Luther congregationally, and Jean Calvin, universally. All fought (sometimes violently) for what they believed was good and proper music. All still have advocates today; but Luther has maintained his influence in the broadest and deepest way throughout today's Christian worship. Congregational singing is still practiced in a large majority of all kinds of churches.

History of Church Music in the 18th and 19th Centuries

The Reformation era brought on dramatic changes in the Christian church, not only in the way the church functioned doctrinally, but, particularly in the way music was enacted. Martin Luther, founder of the protestant reform, considered congregational song

⁵¹ Daniel Trocme-Latter, *May Those Who Know Nothing be Content to Listen: Loys Bourgeois's Advertissement to the Psalms (1551)* (Sheffield, England: Equinox, 2011), 336-337.

to be a powerful way of worshipping God, because every member of the congregation was involved in the act of singing. Therefore, Luther, along with his colleagues created over 500 different hymnals for worship during the reformation. The new hymns were liturgical as well as biblical.⁵²

In North America, after the reformation, congregational hymn singing became the way of singing for most Protestant worship services. “Since the Anglo-American Great Awakening, two and a half centuries ago, the poets and composers of the evangelical tradition have created literally tens of thousands of hymns and tunes.”⁵³ Hymns have, therefore, become an important aspect of American religiosity. “Hymn singing was a primary vehicle of the numinous, the very wind of the Spirit. . . . They served as educational media for children, aids to prayer for adults, homiletic device for preachers, and literacy material for poets and novelists.”⁵⁴

Hymns have remained a strategic and significant part of singing in the church, it is therefore, necessary to define hymns. One of the earliest, most famous definitions and most celebrated is that of St. Augustine:

Know ye not what a hymn is? It is song with praise of God. . . . If thou praisest God and singest not, thou utterest no hymn if thou singest and praisest not God but another thing, thou utterest no hymn. A hymn then containeth these three things, song . . . and praise . . . and that praise of God. . . .⁵⁵

The British hymnodist, Brian Wren, gives another definition of hymns. He has defined hymns as “song(s) of faith sung by a group of people that ideally unify the

⁵² Leaver, “Hymnody,” 153 and 154.

⁵³ Phillip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow, eds., *Music in American Religious Experience* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2006), 123.

⁵⁴ Bohlman, et al., *Music*, 123-124.

⁵⁵ Herbermann, et al, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York, NY: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc., 1913), 595.

singers, not merely in fellowship but in faith.” He further states, “Hymns, as corporate, sung statements of faith, hope, seeking and praise, can empower people, by putting their faith into memorable, beautiful, repeatable language” (1986).⁵⁶ The Hymns Society gives a broader definition of hymns: In essence, it defines hymns as “Lyrical poems, reverently and devotionally conceived. They should be simple and metrical in form, genuinely emotional, poetic and literary in style, spiritual in quality, with direct ideas and so immediately apparent to unify a congregation while singing.”⁵⁷ Each definition can be attested. While growing up worshipping at First Wesleyan Methodist Church, every time we met, we sang hymns. They were also sung in the home, when the family got together, which was often. Therefore, a hymn to me means, lifting up voices in song of praise and adoration, to the most deserving, loving being, our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Psalmody in the English Colonies

The year 1579 is the earliest recorded instance of English music in North America. By 1607, Anglicans were singing their Old Version, Sternhold and Hopkins’ psalms. Nevertheless, as usual, music was steadily in a transitional mode. In 1696, Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady published their *New Version of the Psalms of David, Fitted to Tunes Used in Churches in New England*. Several colonial Anglican congregations adopted this *New Version*. However, by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, there was a noticeable deterioration of psalm singing in the churches in New England. As a matter of

⁵⁶ Judith Gray, “When in Our Music God Is Glorified: Singing and Singing about Singing in a Congregational Church,” in Phillip V. Bohlman, Edith W. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow eds.: *Music in American Religious Experience* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 195.

⁵⁷ John Hamersma, “Tradition and Trend in our Hymnody,” *The Reformed Journal* 12 no. 11 (December 1962): 10, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

fact, the English-speaking colonies used but a few tunes that they sang line by line as the deacon gave out the psalms text.⁵⁸

As usual in church music, changes were continually taking place. “At the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a movement to displace usual singing (lining-out, singing line by line) by regular singing (stanza by stanza). . . . This development had great consequences on the hymnic development of the eighteenth century, especially Methodist hymnody.”⁵⁹ This new way of singing appeared to make an improvement on the way congregations sang in the church. Improvisations were continuously taking place in the worship service of the churches.

Another way congregational singing improved was accomplished at King’s Chapel, in Boston Massachusetts, for in 1714, they became the first church in the colonies to make regular use of an organ. Regular singing and singing schools were also quickly established in some places. During the Great Awakening, of the 1730s and 1740s, congregations were singing with three part harmony, and the women had a part by themselves.⁶⁰ It was also during the Great Awakening that the hymns of Isaac Watts (1674-1748), Charles Wesley (1707-1788), and his brother John became a familiar and welcoming way of singing.⁶¹

By the late 1750s, choirs were established, and in 1760 anthems were being sung. With this innovative way of singing, controversy continued, due to the constant changes.

⁵⁸ John Ogasapian, *Church Music in America, 1620-2000* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 123.

⁵⁹ Leaver, “Hymnody,” 159.

⁶⁰ Ogasapian, *Church Music in America*, 16, 19.

⁶¹ Ogasapian, *Church Music in America*, 26.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, singing masters were expanding their musical activities from teaching in singing schools to compiling and composing their own music. These composers were known as tunesmiths.⁶²

There is also evidence that African Americans were not only singing religious songs, but publishing as well. Melva Wilson Costen, author of the journal article “Music in the Liturgy of African American Congregations” gives creditable information concerning hymnal music from African-Americans:

There is . . . documented evidence of the publication and use of hymnals compiled by African-Americans for congregational use beginning in 1801 and continuing in various published documents into the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, few African-American denominations kept records of the use of hymnals as a “liturgical” resource during the eras in which they were printed. But the fact that published song books existed indicates that church leaders knew the importance of documenting some aspects of liturgical life.⁶³

Through most of the eighteenth century, blacks continued attending the same churches as whites, sitting in segregated sections. They sang and learned the same hymns as the whites, songs from Tate and Brady, Watts, and Wesley. After 1800 most slaves in the south continued going to church where their owners decided. However, in the north, free urban blacks started their own congregations. In Philadelphia, Richard Allen (1760-1831), founding pastor of the first African Methodist Church, Mother Bethel, compiled and published the first African-American hymnal in 1801. His song book entitled, “Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns” contained texts of writers such as Watts and Wesley. However, Allen modified some of the texts to relate to his black congregation.

⁶² Ogasapian, *Church Music in America*, 33, 35

⁶³ Melva Wilson Costen, “Music in the Liturgy of African-American Congregations,” *The Journal of the International Theological Center* 31, no.1-2 (Fall-Spring 2003-2004): 114-115, accessed February 16, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

He also added to a total of sixty-four texts, some of them were thought to be his own work.⁶⁴

“One African American composer, Albert Charles Tindley, introduced to North American Christian music, the genre of Christian song known as “The Urban African American Gospel Hymn.”⁶⁵ Tindley was a son of slave parents, who taught himself to read and write. He was a prominent Methodist Episcopal Church preacher in the Philadelphia area where he served for three decades in the church named after him, Tindley Temple.⁶⁶

Tindley wrote songs incorporating the black folk imagery which attempted to interpret the oppression African Americans faced as they settled in the cities of the north, an experience not essentially different from that which produced the spirituals. Unlike the spirituals, however, the Tindley gospel songs have few references to the Old Testament characters and events. The Tindley hymns (which are congregational songs), admonish those who suffer the storms of life to stand fast in Christ. They are songs of dependency (“I Will go if My Father Holds My Hand”), songs of ascendancy (“A Better Home”), songs of hope (“Some Day”), and songs of faith (“I’ll Overcome Some day”). But the Tindley songs are not simply other worldly. They are also addressed to helping the oppressed to survive *this* world.⁶⁷

African Americans have contributed in numerous ways to the field of music, and most definitely church music. During slavery, songs were created on the spot to send messages, for example, to someone who was running away to freedom. Costen relates: “Spirituals were considered religious from their inception; they functioned during the slave period in a ‘dualistic manner’ to communicate messages from one person or group

⁶⁴ Ogasapian, *Church Music in America*, 172, 174.

⁶⁵ Young, *My Great Redeemer’s Praise*, 105.

⁶⁶ Young, *My Great Redeemer’s Praise*, 105.

⁶⁷ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 360.

to another. They announced escape routes for slaves and signaled the need to abort plans if necessary.”⁶⁸ Presently, there are several identifiable genres of African-American vocal music: African Chants, Spirituals, Songs of Improvisation such as Meter (ed) Music, Hymns Composed by African Americans, Spiritual Arrangements, Black Gospel Music, African Songs, Gospel Rap, Holy Hip Hop.⁶⁹

The most popular genre that is regularly sung today in African-American churches is Gospel. Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993), is acknowledged as “The Father of Black Gospel”; however, he was preceded by other African-American composers: William Henry Sherwood, Charles Price Jones, Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933), and Lucie Eddie Campbell (1885-1963).

The body of work created by Dorsey stands out because it synthesized all of the elements of the newest of African American sacred music into a twentieth-century whole and because Dorsey composed in such a captivating and inclusive style that all those who were to come after him automatically, consciously or unconsciously, borrowed from and added to the concept and practice he had established.⁷⁰

It is understandable how some worshippers had a negative connotation to this style of music, due to the fact that African-American gospel, night clubs and worship services experienced the same music. Nevertheless, from the African American’s background of folk rhetoric, and expressions, bodily movement, charismatic energy, etc., it became a way of singing, particularly in the African-American church.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Costen, “Music in the Liturgy of African American Congregations,” 134.

⁶⁹ Costen, “Music in the Liturgy of African American Congregations,” 120.

⁷⁰ Bernice Johnson Reagon, ed., *We’ll Understand it Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1992), 142.

⁷¹ Costen, “Music in the Liturgy of African American Congregations,” 142.

In the conclusion of her article, Costen tells us about the intensity of music in African-American congregations. She makes mention of how it will be a continual way of hearing God's word through this African-American music. "With music as one of the important means of hearing the Word of God, it can be predicted that a deeper level of discipleship and spirituality is likely to prevail."⁷²

In Costen's book entitled *In Spirit and in Truth*, she gives relativity to acquiring that deeper level of spirituality through worship, of which music is an essential part. "If worship has demonstrated both spirit and truth, we as the body of Christ have experienced life at its fullest."⁷³ Planning for lives that may be fulfilled through worship must be done by parents, preachers, teachers, leaders, musicians, the young, and the old. We must worship the Lord, in spirit and in truth.⁷⁴

Conclusion

Throughout the centuries, church music has evolved from one style or genre to another. It sometimes appears to go backwards, as it repeats itself; then moves forward as it transitions in to how it is practiced in the Christian church, at any particular time. No matter the era of music, one style that will never grow old, or disappear is hymnody.

⁷² Costen, "Music in the Liturgy of African American Congregations," 150.

⁷³ Melva Wilson Costen, *In Spirit and in Truth*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 205.

⁷⁴ Costen, *In Spirit and in Truth*, 205.

Music and memory have been joined in hymn singing as an active, inclusive, positive art form used by the church to facilitate the teaching and remembering of doctrine.⁷⁵

Today, many churches no longer have hymnals in their pews and hymns are very seldom sung.

Rev. Dr. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., senior servant of the historic Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington DC, put this concern in perspective when he spoke at Omega Baptist Church's Homecoming Revival on 30 October, 2014. This is the essence of what he said, "We have to go back and sing those old hymns that give the Word of God. We have to teach our people, from the old to the young. We must start now."

⁷⁵ Young, *My Great Redeemer's Praise*, 140.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Spiritually forming TOTs, children age two to five, is a necessary endeavor, to help them to learn how to serve in God's Kingdom. Teaching them through Christian education and the arts is a way to form them spiritually, and to prepare them to serve in their congregations. There are many who wonder about the practice of allowing young children to participate, and be a part of the worship ministry. They wonder if it is sanctioned by God, and how, by any means can children be thought of theologically. In referring to theology, and what it consists of, Don Saliers sums it up well.

Theologians, or any who wish to speak of God and the mysteries of human life in this world, can learn much from disciplined, attentive listening to a wide range of music. But anyone who wishes to "do theology" as we say, in words, will come to see that "understanding" language about God and human existence before God is often given to us most profoundly when we sing or hear. . . .Theology ultimately points toward and participates in the movement and the light, the heavenly music and dance of being in God.¹

Because this project focuses on children and the arts, this theological investigation must focus on each of those as well. It is important to understand that, in order to help children think theologically they must be introduced to God, at least in part, through Christian education, and the arts. However, one must also ask questions, such as what can children know and understand about theology.

¹ Don E. Saliers, *Music and Theology: Horizons in Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 77.

There are many theological authors who discuss the aspects of theology that are associated with children. The author, Jerome W. Berryman, offers an interesting survey of some of the thoughts of theologians throughout history who wrote regarding the theology of children. In his book, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace*,² Berryman identifies some twenty-five theologians, grouped according to their historical period, with brief remarks on their thoughts about children. Out of the twenty-five theologians there are some who speak negatively about children, such as Abelard (1079-1142), who considers children to be a bother, and Jonathon Edwards (1703-1758), who thinks of children as vipers in need of conversion.³

At least three major theologians can be said to have thought highly of children in their theology: Irenaeus (c. 125-c.200); Richard Hooker (1554-1600); and Karl Rahner (1904-1984).⁴ At this point, the three theologians with high regard for children will be addressed.

Though he was Bishop of Lyons, France in the 2nd century, nothing is known about Irenaeus' experience with children. The reason Berryman included him in his brief history of children and the theologians is because his theology's main image is growth. Irenaeus said, "Growth can be seen in children, wheat, and other parts of God's creation. Each flaw is really a happy fault (*felix culpa*), because it stimulates growth." Irenaeus was prompted by Jesus' high view of children to adopt the view for himself.⁵

² Jerome W. Berryman, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace*, (New York, NY: Morehouse, 2009), 202-203.

³ Berryman, *Children and the Theologians*, 202.

⁴ Berryman, *Children and the Theologians*, 202-203.

⁵ Berryman, *Children and the Theologians*, 44, 46.

Irenaeus is, therefore, thought of as a theologian of children, due to the understanding that Irenaeus had of Jesus' love for children. Irenaeus relates children to three topics, sanctity, growth and innocence. In the article by Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Jesus as Child and his praise of the child," Balthasar speaks out on Irenaeus' stance on children. He mentions how Irenaeus, being the first great Father of the Church, explains in a marvelous way, how it takes the Incarnation to show us that being born is a theological, eternal significance.

All men whom Jesus came to save through himself are newly born in God; infants, children. . . This is why he went through all the ages of life: as an infant among infants he sanctified them; as a child among children he sanctified this age and at the same time became a model of devotion and of just submission for children . . . in order to be in every respect a fully accomplished teacher; not merely through preaching the truth, but also according to the age, in that he hallowed it and at the same time became a model for it.⁶

Also in "Christ as the Logos of Childhood: Reflections on the Meaning and Mission of the Child" by Robin Maas, the same quote is given as Balthasar's. She states: "For those who have eyes to see, with the coming of Christ all things human are illumined to the point of transparency. Irenaeus describes this trans-signification in terms of a redeeming recapitulation of human growth and development."⁷

⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, II, 22, 4; cf. III, 18,7, as quoted in Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Jesus as Child and His Praise of the Child," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1995), [625].

⁷ Robin Maas, "Christ as the Logos of Childhood: Reflections on the Meaning and Mission of the Child," *Theology Today*, 56 no.4, accessed November 2, 2015, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

In reference to sanctity, Maas relates how a small child's dependency on adults for survival, causes children to do the adult caretaker's bidding, to love and trust them, which causes a possibility of sanctity in a small child. ⁸

In the section on "Childhood," Maas speaks on the innocence of a child, "each innocent, says Christ, has been granted a special providential grace."⁹ With this statement Maas concludes the section on childhood. "Every child, every vulnerable soul, is promised a heavenly intercessor who begs for grace directly on his behalf. And for each little one led astray, a search is launched to bring them back to the House of the Lord."¹⁰

In the book, *When Children Become People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*, O.M. Bakke singles out Irenaeus and his thought on innocence. He says that Irenaeus operates with a similar association between childhood and innocence. Irenaeus likens it to the nature of Adam and Eve dealing with the fall. He explains their absence of shame over their nakedness by referring to their "innocent and childlike" thoughts.¹¹ These statements have described the sentiments of the theologian Irenaeus, and his theological beliefs dealing with the sanctity, growth and innocence of children.

Richard Hooker was an Anglican clergy of the late sixteenth century. His major writing was on law, including natural and divine laws. The term child or children were

⁸ Maas, "Christ as the Logos of Childhood," 463.

⁹ Maas, "Christ as the Logos of Childhood," 463.

¹⁰ Maas, "Christ as the Logos of Childhood," 464.

¹¹ O.M. Bakke, *When Children Become People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 69.

used about thirty-one times.¹² Hooker believed that the origin of the knowledge of natural law is a relationship with God, which children can experience. He believed that some of the laws of nature are discovered by reason, but some can be known by all, even a child of two days. Although there is much to be learned after infancy, a mature youth can develop such judgment to be moved to seek his or her own baptism.¹³ Therefore, children being human, although young, can eventually grow up to the level of an adult. It is the law of human nature.

A more contemporary theologian is Karl Rahner, who was born in 1904 in Freiburg, Germany, and joined the Jesuits at the age of eighteen. In Rahner's essay, "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood" (Rahner 1971), he stresses how thinking about children, goes beyond pedagogy, the field of Christian education, to which the subject is usually dismissed by theologians. He claims that children are open to God. We do not have to assume that childhood comes before later stages of development. At every stage, one becomes whole within oneself. Also, eternity is not a final stage, because the whole of existence is always redeemed. We move toward the eternity of childhood; we do not move away from childhood toward eternity.¹⁴

These three former theologians each had thoughts concerning children. Other recent theologians have also developed thoughts on the theology of children: Howard Stone and James Duke let it be known that theology does not have a preference of any sort, be it age, gender, or whatever. In the book *How to Think Theologically* the premise

¹² Berryman, *Children and the Theologians*, 104-107.

¹³ Berryman, *Children and the Theologians*, 107-108.

¹⁴ Berryman, *Children and the Theologians*, 161.

is that all Christians are theologians, simply because they are Christian. The writers state, “To be Christian at all is to be a theologian, there are no exceptions.”¹⁵

Worship in Context: Liturgical Theology Children and the City, by Stephen Burns mentions how children are a neglected topic in Christian theology, and there is a strange absence of reflection on children’s lives in a great deal of Christian theology. In his book, he gives information from the report, *New Patterns for Worship*, published by the Church of England in 2002, as part of its common Worship Resources.¹⁶ This report has several reports that evaluate young people in worship. Quotes of some of their findings are as follows:

In one particular report, *Youth a Part*, it was stated “Young people must be taken seriously if they are able to stay with the Church or if the Church wants to attract young people into its work and missions . . . because they are the church of today. . . . (4.29) Children are the Church of today.” Another report *Child in the Church* denotes: “The church that does not accept children unconditionally in its fellowship is depriving those children of what is rightfully theirs, but the deprivation such as the Church itself will suffer is far more grave.” The report *Children in the Way* emphasized “if children are to continue in the way of faith, if they are to continue on the path to which the Church welcomed them at baptism, then they must be aided and supported by adult fellow-Christians who are also on the journey and must also be acknowledged as those who sometimes lead the way.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Howard W. Stone, *How to Think Theologically* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁶ Stephen Burns, *Worship in Context: Liturgical Theology, Children and the City* (London, England: Epworth Press, 2006), 25.

¹⁷ Burns, *Worship in Context*, 45, 47-48.

It is obvious from Burns reports that he alludes to in his book that children are important, and should be thought of theologically. Children should be active in their church homes, and should not be ostracized, or kept silent in the church. Children are as precious as jewels and have a right to be seen and heard in the worship service.

Joyce Ann Mercer, in *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*¹⁸ gives an answer or reason for children's importance theologically, by referring to Mark's narrative. Mercer states:

For Mark, children and childhood are gifts from God, not because they are carefree, but because God has a purpose for children. God gives children to the church and the world so that God may be known. "When you welcome a child you welcome me. And when you welcome me, you welcome not only me but the one who sent me" (Mk 9:37, AT).¹⁹

According to Joyce Ann Mercer, children are special to Jesus; therefore, they should be special to the church.

We have thus seen that children are first and foremost the graced, blessed, and beloved children of God. Adults, too, are primarily constituted by their identities as children of the Divine. Then, the most important theological feature of children in relation to adults lies not in how they differ according to a metaphorical hierarchy defining their relationships in families or in congregations. Accordingly, the most salient theological feature of children in relation to adults is that *both children and adults are children of God* and therefore occupy the same position in relation to God, a human position of gratitude, need, vulnerability, culpability, agency, and vocation.²⁰

Children have their place theologically, for they are a part of the Church just like adults. They should have their place in the traditions of the church. Children may seem to be of the least, and not as important as the adults; but they are esteemed highly in the

¹⁸ Joyce Ann Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, Press, 2005), 66-67.

¹⁹ Mercer, *Welcoming Children*, 66.

²⁰ Mercer, *Welcoming Children*, 256.

Kingdom of God. Mercer alludes to the fact that children are called to lead in showing how to welcome the unwelcome.

A theologian known for her work in Christian education is Olivia Pearl Stokes (1916-2002). Being the first African American woman to receive a doctorate in religious education, Stokes was instrumental in promoting Christian education to all ages. According to Stokes, education in the black church, with insights from black theology, “a systematic interpretation of the meaning and significance of the Christian faith for the worshipping, witnessing, and proclaiming black Christian community,”²¹ will help bring about a change for the better for black people.

In the book, *Who Are We?*, Olivia Pearl Stokes, wrote an essay entitled, “Education in the Black Church: Design For Change.” She gives a history of how blacks encountered a design of change in African American churches through religious education. She takes us through a historical journey of the years emanating from the black social and racial revolution in the 1960s that blacks encountered, mainly led by black college youth. The reflection on racism by young theological scholars and students as expressed in classical theology and the religious practices in American churches is the result of Black theology, which was inspired by Dr. James Cone. Today, a healthy diversity of theological thought has taken place among black theological scholars.²²

The black church, holding Christian values and standards is a servant of social change. The educational mission of the black church is informed by the following theological rationale.

²¹ Norman H. Thompson, ed., *Religious Education and Theology*, (Birmingham, AL: religious Education Press, 1982), 72.

²² John Westerhoff, ed., *Who Are We: The Quest for a Religious Education*, (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1978), 219-221.

The church is mission when it participates in God's mission. We become instruments of God's mission as we participate in his reconciling ministry. The goal of mission . . . is God's purpose that alienated man be reconciled to God and to his fellow men. . . .Christian mission today requires radical change in our present structures, practices, and ideologies. . . .It is the educational task of the black church to join theological reflection with those processes which expose the structures which enslave; to develop techniques for freedom, and to give structures to those values of the black experience for building community for God's people.²³

Allied to this perspective on mission are other theological affirmations that guide education in the black church. One such affirmation is "to enable and equip black children, black youth and black adults to discover their divinely created human potential."²⁴

In the section titled "The Ethnic School: A Suggested Model For Black Religious Education," a model purposed by Stokes, it is mentioned how black youth are demanding of their elders to know about their actual situation in America, and the heritage of the motherland, Africa.²⁵ For this reason, Stokes proposed a Saturday Ethnic School that stressed the importance of teaching African and African American heritage in the church. The curriculum was grounded in "Black history, Black church history and contemporary issues viewed from the Black perspective."²⁶ The school is similar to how the Jewish taught their children as Deuteronomy 6:7 stresses, in relation to the Shema, so that the children would know their heritage. The ethnic school would also aim to develop

²³ Westerhoff, *Who are We*, 223.

²⁴ Westerhoff, *Who Are We*. 223- 225.

²⁵ Westerhoff, *Who Are We*, 226.

²⁶ Yolanda Y. Smith, "Olivia Pearl Stokes," *Talbot School of Theology*, accessed November 23, 2015, http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/protestant/olivia_Stokes/.

creativity within its members, to express their religious insights through drama, music, dance, painting, poetry, and creative writing.²⁷

At the conclusion of Stokes essay, dealing with education and its theological concepts, in the black church, she notes change, no matter how uncomfortable or unwelcome it might be, must be planned for if it is to take place. All of God's creatures require and demand that change comes, so that this oppressive and unjust society becomes the kingdom of God on earth.²⁸ In keeping with Olivia Pearl Stokes' vision of Christian education, and theology, particularly, Black theology; if it is made available to mankind, a change for the betterment of not only black people, but all of God's people, will eventually become a way of life.

Child Theology Movement

A form of child theology which presents a new approach is called "Child Theology Movement, CTM."²⁹ It is relevant to this project in a phenomenal way, because it is Kingdom based, and it relates to the New Testament scripture of this study, Luke 18:15-17. The question at hand is: What is "Child Theology?" CTM provides this answer: "Jesus put a child in the centre of the disciples when they were having a theological argument about greatness in the Kingdom of God. It is plain that Jesus thought the child's presence would give the disciples a clue to the essential truth they were missing."³⁰

²⁷ Westerhoff, *Who Are We?*, 228.

²⁸ Westerhoff, *Who Are We?*, 234.

²⁹ Child Theology Movement: "Theology that Starts with the Child Placed in the Midst of Jesus," accessed September 18, 2014, <http://www.childtheology.org/>.

³⁰ "Child Theology Movement."

How CTM Works:

The Child Theology Movement works primarily by consultation. . . . This means facilitating open exploratory discussion. CTM is not an ideology being disseminated from a central point. It is a servant of free responsible thinking disciples who are seeking for the Kingdom of God and want to work at theology with the child in the midst. So CTM works as a movement in conversation with varied persons, groups, organizations and churches. . . . Conversation that is theoretical, practical, critical and cooperative, down-to-earth and as open as the call to the Kingdom of God.”³¹

Child theology puts a new spin on the thought that children can be part of theology. As stated at the beginning of this theological foundation paper, children do have a right to be thought of theologically. Just as this new movement specifies that Jesus allowed the children to come to the forefront, when others, such as the disciples did not think it was appropriate. The children are important, and must not be ignored, or pushed away. This theology coincides with Jesus’ theology as he demonstrates in the gospels of Matt 18:2, and Mk 9:36.

However, there is controversy with the CTM. On the Tryst Academia site, the author argues that putting the child in the center (for adult theologians) is impossible. He feels that it remains an adult exercise, and is interpreted from the adult world. He feels that it is illustrative versus formative. The site states: “I assert therefore that “Child

³¹ “Child Theology Movement.”

Theology” is a misnomer if it means something like Feminist Theology (some theology done from the perspective of a certain kind of woman).³²

CTM is in congruence with the theology for children understanding this project. When the teens from Omega came forth to let the church know that they were not satisfied with the youth services, the teen council was invited to the youth worship planning meetings. Placing the teens in the center, and allowing them to voice their opinions and desires, for how the youth worship service was to be conducted, was an asset. As the teens listened to the advice of the youth leaders, it has not only elevated the youth worship services, but it has also helped to advance the youth in serving in God’s Kingdom.

The younger children, have also been inspired by this idea, and look forward to advancing to this ministry. The youth ministry at Omega is in the process of including ages five from the TOTS Church, and ages six to twelve from the KIDS Church. There are younger children, who are far advanced and ready to become part of the council. The principles that CTM espouses has been lived out through enabling the children to grasp hold of what is being taught to them, through Christian education and the arts, about how to serve in God’s Kingdom. Through this process, we all disciple and learn from one another.

The book *Entry Point, by Wilmer and White*³³ is a book that focuses on the child and theology. It relates to (Matthew 18 3-4) where Jesus places the child in the midst of

³² “What is Child Theology?” Tryst with Academia: Reflections From Within an Academic Theological Setting,” accessed October 4, 2014, <http://academianayk.wordpress.com/2007/10/06/what-is-theology/>.

³³ H. Willmer, and K. White, *Entry Point: Towards Child Theology with Matthew 18*. (London, England: WTL Publications), 2013.

the people and instructs them, to become like little children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. In *Entry Point*, comments are given that relate to a theologian, who must be mentioned in this document. He is none other than Karl Barth, (1886-1968), an important Swiss theologian, who wrote about children. His book, *The Christian Life*, was published in 1981, after his death. This is some of what he wrote concerning children.

The revelation is 'made exclusively to babies' (who are 'obviously not to be construed as stupid or muddleheaded people'). The wholly new thing that has come in Jesus is open only to those people who are an adequate match, who are open to it, because they have nothing behind them, because they are not stopped or blocked up against it by any intellectual, moral, aesthetic, or religious a priori that they have brought with them, because they are empty pages. This is plainly the point of the story about the child that Jesus set in the midst of his disputing disciples. . . .³⁴

This point that Barth is making about the babies, or small children, is what is at the forefront in this study. Jesus took a child, and placed that child in the midst of the disciples, and told them, we are to be as this little child, or children, for they are as the Kingdom of God. In his remarks concerning Barth, and his thought on children, Willmer ends with this sentence. "It seems, Barth not merely made the child placed in the midst by Jesus a significant part of the content of his theology, but he saw the child as a clue about how to be a theologian."³⁵

Children, Worship, and the Arts

As has been established, children are an asset to a church. They are life to a church. Without them a church usually dies quickly. It is the adults' responsibility: parents, teachers, clergy, pastors, and the church community, to help children to become

³⁴ Haddon Willmer, "Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen-Child Theologians?" accessed October 26, 2015, <http://www.childtheology.org/blog/karl-barth=and=eduard-thurneysen-child-theologians/>.

³⁵ Willmer, "Karl Barth and Eduard."

active in the church and to be a part of the body of Christ. The spiritual formation of a child is what should be prefaced in the child by directing the growth and development of their whole being. Worship, music, and the arts is an ideal way in which to bring the child's spirit into fruition through the Word of God.

In "The Joy of Worship: The Mosaic Invitation to the Presence of God (Deut. 12:1-14)," Daniel Block supports the position that all people belong as worshippers in church. However, that is not always true in some congregations, today. Daniel Block comments on the fact that in today's praise and worship, God is not the true agenda. Oftentimes, it is more about show and hoopla. People in the church should be more concerned about worship that pleases God than about pleasing self. God's people should be united in the joy and privilege of worshipping God together.³⁶

"Children belong in the Gathered Worshipping Community" is a heading in the book, *Creative Designs with Children at Worship*. "When the Christian community gathers for worship, all of its members should be encouraged to participate. Worship is the celebration of all the community's people of all ages together."³⁷ To reiterate, children should not be, as in the days when they were in their homes at the dinner table, seen but not heard or inactive in the church, only as spectators. "Rather, we welcome them as members of the household of faith, encouraging their active involvement in the life and way of the household."³⁸

³⁶ Daniel I. Block, "The Joy of Worship: The Mosaic Invitation to the Presence of God (Deut. 12:1-14)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, no. 646 (April-June 2005): 149, accessed February 16, 2015 *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EBSCOhost*.

³⁷ A. Roger Gobbel and Phillip C. Huber, *Creative Designs with Children at Worship* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1991), 4.

³⁸ Gobbel and Huber, *Creative Designs*, 4.

Too often the question is asked, “What can we do for our children during worship? Or, parents say, “There is nothing in the worship service for our children.” The authors of *Creative Designs*, Gobbel and Huber, consider that question of what to do with our children during worship, to be improper and misleading.”³⁹ Sometimes children are treated as cast-offs in the church. They are sent to day-cares during church services, or just left sitting in the pews where they are bored to no end as they are surrounded by adult talk and functions. There may be a time during Christmas, or Easter where they have a chance to recite, sing or give a little entertainment during the worship service; however, often-times the children have a special program outside of regular worship where they are able to show their talented gifts.

A more fruitful and exciting, yet more difficult and demanding question is. “What shall we do together with children so that all of us together may do the proper work of the community?” A strong response to this question is, “we take seriously who our children are, affirm their already given place in the community, and declare that they do belong. We point them to the reality given by our Lord, God’s Church.”⁴⁰ Sending children away each Sunday to a setting of their own, is not very fruitful for them; for they learn by seeing and hearing what is done. They learn by participating in the worship services.

Our children belong in and with the gathered, worshipping community. There, as in no other place, they receive the affirmation of who they really are. There they are surrounded by the words, events, symbols, and actions which identify them. There they do worship even as they learn to worship. There they do Christian even as they learn to become Christian. Whatever we do along with children in worship must not isolate or exclude but plunge them into the very center of the

³⁹ Gobbel and Huber, *Creative Designs*, 5.

⁴⁰ Gobbel and Huber, *Creative Designs*, 5.

community's life and work, encouraging and enabling their active participation as they are able.⁴¹

Understanding children in this way suggests the importance of having parts of worship that are accessible to children. Since most children love to sing, and learn scripture more readily and easily when they are taught songs that correspond with God's Word, music is a good place to begin. Children retrieve a theological foundation from the songs that are of God's Word. Through song, children gain knowledge of ecclesiastical, spiritual, holy and doctrinal stances. Their system of belief is nurtured as they repetitiously learn and sing to the glory of God. The Word of God becomes ingrained within their minds, spirits and very being, to the point of finally being able to grasp hold of the meanings of what they are singing.

In her book, *Music as Theology*, Maeve Louise Heaney gives a summation of how music or genre differences do not matter. It may be gospel, spirituals, hymns, hip-hop, rap, classical, etc.; it is always the same message. She states: "There are many gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; there are many ways of serving, but it is the same Lord. There are many forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God."⁴² Elizabeth McE. Shields, specifically speaks on children's religious songs in her book, *Music in the Religious Growth of Children*. She says, "The inspiration of the Bible has been a major source of which sculptors, painters, poets, and nonetheless musicians have breathed its

⁴¹ Gobbel and Huber, *Creative Designs*, 15.

⁴² Maeve Louise Heaney, *Music as Theology: What Music Says About the Word* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publication, 2012), 300.

breath of life ... this inspiration is evidenced in any worthy compilation of children's religious songs."⁴³

Shields gives a somewhat contradictory statement when she says, "Songs about the Bible may not be so valuable as those which help children to an intimate experience of what it teaches." She then explains further "Even though songs about the Bible may not be the most valuable, they are important and should be included in what we might call 'the music curriculum of the church school.'"⁴⁴

Children learn more about the Bible when they sing songs that they can understand. There is definite value in teaching children songs about the Bible for it gives them focus and enables them to have abundant understanding. Teaching children the Word of God and repeatedly addressing the meaning gives them understanding and helps them to retain and maintain that of which they are singing. It gives them a grounded theological stance, in which they can speak out on God's Word with understanding.

Teaching children the Word of God is very valuable and necessary. Children learn what they are singing about, with repetition, just as they learn anything else. God's Word is most important and valuable for children to learn who they are and whose they are. Teaching them the Word, particularly through worship, music, and the arts gives them their theological position, and through song, it is given with exuberance, joy, and fulfillment.

Theologian, Heaney expounds on what music says about the Word of God, in *Music as Theology* and its theological premise and aesthetic discipline. She introduces

⁴³ Elizabeth McE. Shields, *Music in the Religious Growth of Children* (New York, NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), 83.

⁴⁴ Shields, *Music*, 83.

many theologians' concepts of music in relation to how God is revealed in art form, and its theological beauty. Heaney reveals how delving into and experiencing the theological gifts of music brings us closer to the clarification and understanding of how and why we worship the Lord in artistic form.

One such author she mentions is Garcia-Rivera who co-authored a book with Scirghi, called *Living Beauty*, who develops his thought into what the authors describe as "liturgical aesthetics." Garcia-Rivera touches briefly on the theme of music defining church songs as an expression not only of delight (enjoyment) in life, but also of gratitude for the "memory" of who God is and who we are in God."⁴⁵ In the conclusion of her book, Heaney states, "The human reality that "speaks" for God, in this book, is music. Music has something to say [theologically] which other expressive forms do not, or cannot."⁴⁶

Music is a powerful source that permeates throughout the whole being of a person, which resonates within the hearts and minds of humankind, from childhood, all the way up to adulthood. Therefore, in a theological sense, the theology of music correlates with the theology of children in the significance of the arts being a source of equipping children with the Word.

Theologian, Don Saliers goes back to his childhood to remember what music and a church setting exemplified to him. He remembers playing instruments such as the piano, violin and the clarinet for prayer meetings and in the Sunday school orchestra. He elaborates:

⁴⁵ Heaney, *Music as Theology*, 240, 241.

⁴⁶ Heaney, *Music as Theology*, 308.

Hymns and songs were essential to how persons in those churches conceived God. “How Great Thou Art” expressed for many, their very experience of God in awe and wonder. For others, the classical hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy” framed their Biblical picture of God. For others, “A Mighty Fortress is our God” expressed the heart of faith. It was clear to me, even then, in how they sang and how they talked about God, that hymns carried much of their theology.⁴⁷

In gaining more insight on Saliers’ thoughts on the connection of theology and music, Heaney gives a brief mention of Don Saliers, who she coins “a contemporary theologian who bridges the areas of thought between music in theology and music in liturgy. His relatively recent book, *Music and Theology*, although short, brings together various insights on music and theology.”⁴⁸

Just as Saliers could relate to songs as a child, it is the same with children today. The connectivity to the theology of children, and music is evident. Songs children can relate to, bring an awareness of who they are theologically. Songs such as “I’m in the Lord’s Army” and “I am a Mighty Christian” demonstrate a theology as they deal with a world of militancy.

The children sing those songs with vitality and vigor, for they feel that in this world of chaos and violence they can overcome with the weapons that are not carnal, but spiritual.

They are taught to know, and understand, that they are more than conquerors and can be victorious.

In his book, *Music and Theology*, Saliers gives a more in depth reasoning on the correlation of music and children, by explaining how children relate to music in the sense of processing theological thoughts. He explains how we come to learn the “music” of the

⁴⁷ Saliers, *Music and Theology*, Prelude, Viii.

⁴⁸ Heaney, *Music as Theology*, 252.

sound of language, in speaking and learning to understand one another. When children listen to their parents or others speak, particularly the patterns of sound, they learn to imitate the “music” of words. Also, when a child has someone to read to them, they become familiar with the pitch, tone of voice; recognize the rhythms, etc., even though they may not understand the words. With storytelling, it is even more dramatic because the child learns to read the facial and bodily expressions of the storyteller.⁴⁹ Saliers says, “These ordinary facts about learning a language illuminate a connection between music and theological thinking.”⁵⁰ Children love to mimic what they hear. It is a learning tool for them. Therefore, we should speak and sing words and songs that are scriptural and of sound doctrine, which enables our children to be theologically sound as well.

Conclusion

In this doctoral study of teaching children the Word of God through Christian education and the arts, even children as young as one year, start out as theologians, because they watch, listen, and learn from their Christian parents at home. When they are taken to church, Sunday school, Bible Study, and TOTs Church, they mimic and learn from what they have seen and heard which enables them in their own way to become young theologians. Therefore, parental intervention is a very important piece in this study, for children oftentimes become, and are influenced by their environment, and to what they are exposed.

⁴⁹ Saliers, *Music and Theology*, 31.

⁵⁰ Saliers, *Music and Theology*, 31.

Children learn theology as they participate in church functions, such as singing in the choir, dancing with the dance ministry, rapping about things of God and humanity, and acting in skits that relate to life in the world, and things that pertain to God. Omega's youth pastor, Rev. Joshua Ward, preached on Youth Sunday, October 27, 2013, about standing in whatever circumstances we may find ourselves. The theme was "Put on the Whole Armor of God" (Eph 6:10-18). Rev. Joshua told the youth that theology was the study of God, but let them know that whatever they do, particularly in the church, should be done with fervor, and to the glory of God. As the youth presented their songs, skits, dances, raps, prayers, and recitations, he reminded them that it was all a part of the building of their theological foundation. It therefore, does not matter what age we happen to be; we all, as a body of Christ, from two to ninety-two and beyond, have a part in establishing, and presenting a theological message to the world.

Children are not exempt from learning, expressing and experiencing what other theologians have known and experienced. They have an encounter with theology when they are taught, and learn in their homes, by their parents just as God's Word commands in Deuteronomy 6:7. Training starts at home, then expands and matures within them while they are serving in their church setting. Teaching children the Word of God through Christian education, worship, music and the arts enables them to be theologically grounded as they learn, serve, and participate in honoring God through the methods mentioned above.

Theology may seem incongruent with what we understand of children; nevertheless, there are a select group of theologians, who seek to prove otherwise. Theologians such as Irenaeus, Hooker, Rahner, and Barth, to name a few, give credence

to the fact that children are, or can be, theological beings. It is basically up to the adults, parents, teachers, volunteers, and congregants, to lead our children toward that goal.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

There have been those who have understood the importance of educating children since the very earliest days. *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World* explores ancient childhood studies. The following poem in the introduction of the chapter entitled, “Pictorial Paideia: Children in the Synagogue” demonstrates an early understanding of the importance of educating children, particularly in religious terms:

If there are not small children, there will be no disciples;
If there are no disciples, there will be no sages;
If there are no sages, there will be no Torah;
If there is not Torah, there will be no synagogues and academies;
If there are no synagogues and academies,
If there are no synagogues and academies, the Holy One will no longer
allow his Presence to dwell in this world (Leviticus Rabbah 11:7)¹

As this poem illustrates childhood is the beginning of faith filled adulthood. Without children where would we be? Small children are significant in all that we do, but we must teach them, lead them, instruct them, spiritually form them, and develop them the right way—and at least part of that way is through the use of the arts.

¹ Sivan Hagith, “Pictorial Paideia: Children in the Synagogue,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, eds. Judith Evans Grubbs, Tim Parkins, with Roslynne Bell (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2012), 532.

Artistic Expression and Worship

Art forms are present in a myriad of ways in our churches, some of which seem too familiar to call art; however, it is important to mention here some of the art forms that are prevalent in most churches including my own Omega Baptist Church. In the *Art of Preaching*, Gary Reiersen gives several examples of those forms:

The building in which [the church] is housed is a structure of architectural form. The service itself is a kind of performance of a drama. The leaders and congregation stand and sit and bow and fold their hands and move about using actions that are repeated week after week in a choreographed-like manner—like a dance. Music is very much a part of the experience; both sung hymns and responses and performed anthems. Literature is at the core as the story and parable and poetry of the Bible is read. Stained glass, banners, and crosses represent the visual arts; in reformed churches there are elements of sculpture, such as the baptismal font and wood carvings on the pulpit and in crosses. The fabric arts are in abundance; in the robes of the clergy and choir, in the paraments adorning pulpit, lectern, and table, in banners and other hangings. Communion ware and candlestick holders represent the craft arts.²

Art surrounds us in abundance at our worship services in our churches.

It can definitely be seen in the dance, the song, and in the dramatization of God's Word, and even in the preaching of God's Word. It is a fact that one can go to a place such as a museum or art gallery to gaze upon many forms of art, which can sooth one's soul and inner being; yet, when one is in the presence of God there is no better place of serenity than the house of God. Reiersen concludes his discourse on art in worship with a remark from James P. White, a prominent contemporary author on worship, "It is time to stop thinking of art as something precious that must be preserved but as something all around us if we but have eyes to see it." Since just about everything that is in a church setting is comprised of art, introducing children to all the different art forms that are

² Gary B. Reiersen, *The Art in Preaching: The Intersection of Theology, Worship, and Preaching with the Arts* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 48.

available in the church is not only rewarding, but necessary, in order to give the children a full understanding of how to honor and serve the Lord in the exalted way God is due.

Another author who focuses on art in relation to religion is, according to Reiersen the most doctrinal of those who write on the subject, Gerardus Van der Leeuw. In *Sacred and Profane Beauty*, van der Leeuw links the various art forms to the article of the trinity—dance and drama to God the father; word, image, and building to the God the Son; and music to God the Holy Spirit. . . .³ In the last part of his book, Vander Leeuw seeks to unify the arts in a general treatment. He asks these questions, “What do all the arts have in common, from the theological point of view? What is the mid-point about which everything turns? What have we discovered up to now?” He summarizes his answers in this way:

The dance reflects the movement of God, which also moves us upon the earth. The drama presupposes the holy place between God and man. Verbal art is the hymn of praise in which the Eternal and his works are represented. Architecture reveals to us the lines of the well-built city of God’s creation. Music is the echo of the eternal Gloria.⁴

What could be greater or more heart-warming, beyond emotion, than children lifting up the name of Christ as they envelope themselves in worshipping through artistic methods. The children also receive a lasting impression when they learn how to worship God in such an aesthetic way, for participation in high praise with the vestments, banners, dance, etc. is an exuberant way to worship, which leaves an everlasting imprint on children. They want to partake of such worship again and again.

³ Reiersen, *The Art in Preaching*, 19.

⁴ Gerardus Vander Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art* (Germany: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1963), 265.

Children and Music

Perhaps this is the point Martin Luther was making when he expressed his special love of music, and how participation in the arts, particularly hymns, should have a place in church life and in the education of young people.

That it is good and God pleasing to sing hymns is, I think, known to every Christian; for everyone is aware not only of the example of the prophets and kings in the Old Testament who praised God with song and sound, with poetry and psaltery, but also of the common and ancient custom of the Christian church to sing Psalms. . . . I would like to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of Him who gave and made them. . . . As it is the world is too lax and indifferent about teaching and training the young for us to abet this trend.⁵

In this statement Martin Luther expresses the sentiment that is exemplified in this study. It is so important for children to learn songs that give praise to our Lord and Savior. Teaching children songs of substance such as hymns, anthems, and praise songs, helps to give them order and direction, turning them away from carnality and the like. Children learn at an early age what, and who it is important for them to know. Teaching little children songs, such as “Yes, Jesus Loves Me,” for example, ingrains upon their minds just how much Jesus actually loves them.

It is essential, therefore, to set about the Christian education of children through music with great care.

Music needs to be approached in the church thoughtfully, because music is an important part of an adult’s and child’s spiritual growth; it comes from biblical authority, which was not added by early church leaders. Music is first mentioned in the beginning of the Bible, and throughout from Genesis to Revelation.⁶

In her book, *Music is for Children*, Connie Fortunato explains how music can be learned by children, even those who are younger than two-years old. She gives a vivid example

⁵ Martin Luther, “Preface to the Wittenberg Hymnal (1524),” in *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader*, ed. Gesa Elsabet Thiessen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 144-145.

⁶ Connie Fortunato, *Music is for Children* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing CO., 1978), 63.

of that fact, and methodology, when she describes how her eighteen-month-old daughter, Stephanie exhibited the way children learn to express themselves musically;

I'd just returned from Saturday music classes, which I taught to four- and five-year-old children. In my exuberance to be home, I walked into the kitchen, clapped three times, and then paused. Stephanie's eyes widened with excitement. I clapped again as I said, "One, two, three, rest." Stephanie looked at me with a sparkle that only a toddler can muster and clapped, one, two, three, and paused.⁷

Fortunato's explanation of this phenomenon lies in the learning ability of the youngest among us. "Music and rhythm can be learned by the young child, because the child's ear is still developing and therefore, is very receptive."⁸

Though memorization is one means for a child to learn scripture, music can be a more effective means of learning. When you give a child the scripture to recite, having them repeat the scripture several times will help them retain it. Sending it home to parents with instructions to continuously repeat the scripture so they will have it in their memory banks can support this kind of learning. However, when the scripture is put to song, the children grasp it faster, especially when singing it with joy and enthusiasm.

This phenomenon was proven in Fortunato's own setting. When she first introduced music instruction into her regular Sunday school time, the adults could not understand why should put the musical with the nonmusical, particularly during Sunday school. However, within a few weeks, all of the children wanted to participate, and they could all recite more scriptures than they had in three years. Many of the children were singing songs during the week at home. When the children were asked by their parents

⁷ Fortunato, *Music is for Children*,

⁸ Fortunato, *Music is for Children*, 10.

what they had learned during the sessions, answers were given instead of the usual shrugged reply of, “Nothing.”⁹

As Fortunato exhibited with her young daughter, music is a language to which young children can relate because their ears for sound are in the developmental stages.

Music is a language—a language that transcends culture, a language for everybody, a language that breaks down the traditional patterns of achievement for the older and more mature and distributes them among the very young. . . . Music can convey truth, express feelings, develop social poise, and establish self-esteem through the texts it employs. None of God’s other gifts has such an ability to penetrate the entire person. . . . The remarkable thing is that music is not reserve for anyone. Music is for everyone—most of all, music is for children!¹⁰

Children and Worship

Music may be the medium for teaching and involving children, but it is important to involve them fully in worship. *Creative Designs with Children at Worship* is a beneficial book portraying children participating in worship. The authors answer the question of what place and role children have in the gathered community. They do an examination of the Christian community of worshippers and demonstrate how important and valuable it is to include children into the total experience of life in the church. The authors, A. Roger Gobbel and Phillip C. Huber, corroborate the precedent initiated within this study. They consider children to be a vital and life enriching part of Christian congregations. Their book provides models for developing church growth and unity through enabling children to actively participate and share their gifts and talents in community worship. It is a complete resource which includes children’s sermons, ideas,

⁹ Fortunato, *Music is for Children*, 2-13.

¹⁰ Fortunato, *Music is for Children*, 55-56.

instructions, and activities, offering strategies for creating worship experiences that include the entire congregation.¹¹

The techniques offered in this book help the children to focus on what the theme is for a certain Sunday, and learn simultaneously; such as the theme, “We Tell About Jesus.” The aim is to enable children to speak (sing) a word about Jesus to the congregation. Material used can be a simple song about Jesus, such as “Go Tell It on the Mountain,” which may be used with a guitar, autoharp, piano, or organ. The children sing the song to the congregation, and then ask the congregation to sing the song with them. In this way, the children and congregation tell each other about Jesus.¹²

As Gobbel and Huber draw one portion of their discussion to a close in “And One Last Long Note,” they state firmly that children must participate in worship.

Our children belong in and with the gathered, worshipping community. There they receive the affirmation of who they already are, and are surrounded by the words, events, symbols, and actions which identify them. There they do worship, learn to worship, do Christian as they learn to become Christian. Whatever we do along with children in worship must not isolate or excluded but plunge them into the very center of the community’s life work, encouraging and enabling their active participation as they are able.¹³

Children are a great asset in the church for they are the church of today. Parents desire to have their children in a church where children are considered to be an important part of the church community, where they have a voice, and a place in worship.

¹¹ A. Roger Gobbel and Phillip C. Huber, *Creative Designs with Children at Worship* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), back cover, 43-44.

¹² Gobbel and Huber, *Creative Designs*, 43.

¹³ Gobbel and Huber, *Creative Designs*, 15.

Children and Learning

Parents as Christian Educators

The Bible is not the only source for recognizing that training children for their role in worship and the church begins at home. Lucie Barber, in *The Religious Education of Preschool Children* writes a chapter entitled, "Parents as Paraprofessionals." In order to identify the need of parents of young children to be more informed, Barber points to the work of other professionals:

In 1967 both Ellis Nelson and Gabriel Moran pleaded for more attention to the education parents of very young children. . . . Michael Lee emphasizes "the importance of the family as the primary agent of religious instruction." Lee has adequately reviewed the research on the importance of the preschool years and stresses that "early family life and background constitute the most powerful, the most pervasive, and the most perduring variable affecting virtually all phases of an individual's learning."¹⁴

According to Barber, then, it becomes the responsibility of religious educators to teach parents of young how to become paraprofessionals.

Religious educators must be challenged to develop teams of paraprofessional parents in every parish or church. Therefore, professionals should train parents to be religious educators of their young children, enabling parents to be prepared for their role as paraprofessionals. If not, the church runs the risk of further decline of its influence in the lives of the people.¹⁵

Parents are the frontrunners for their children to learn how to be an integral part of worship in the church, because teaching children about God starts at home. In some homes, parents assume the role of teacher automatically. It is inherent within them, because they themselves were taught that way.

¹⁴ Lucie W. Barber, *the Religious Education of Preschool Children* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1981), 13.

¹⁵ Barber, *The Religious Education*, 14

Other parents, however, are not aware of the fact that they should teach their children the ways of the church, for they themselves were not taught. Parents do not always recognize that they are teachers, or, if they do, they recognize only their responsibility to teach eating skills, bathroom skills, and dressing skills. Many parents fail to realize that they are teachers of attitudes,¹⁶ which Barber defines as “an enduring learned predisposition to behave in a consistent way toward a given class of object. For religious attitudes then, the given objects are religious in nature. . . .”¹⁷ Parents are the most important people in a young child’s life. They need to be aware of the fact that if children are going to be able to learn about Christ, and sustain that position of faith, it will largely be bound up with the teaching of the parents.

An article written by Voddie Baucham, Jr. entitled, “It’s Up to Parents to Teach Children God’s Word,” expounds upon the role of the parent teaching their child in the home. It refers to the fact that many parents think that they do not have enough Bible knowledge to teach their children God’s Word. Parents must understand, if they can read, they can teach their children God’s Word. All they have to do is stay a step ahead of their children. In the article, parents are told not to be afraid, because God has given them everything they need to teach their children.

A seminary degree is not needed to read the Bible, and to talk about what it means; for God would not have given the responsibility, without knowing that it could be

¹⁶ Barber, *The Religious Education*, 4-15.

¹⁷ Barber, *The Religious Education*, 17.

handled.¹⁸ The home, not the church is the primary place with the responsibility of teaching children the Bible. In this age of professionalism some parents hire someone to teach their child a sport, or to excel in a particular talent. Some might even believe it is possible to hire the children's pastor in hopes of having children become upstanding citizens. Baucham addresses such attitudes by developing a mandate for parents.

If giving our children a biblical worldview is the why of family driven faith, giving them biblical instruction is the what. Our worldview shapes the way we think, but learning and memorizing the Scriptures determine what we think. For example, a child with a biblical worldview may understand the inherent dignity of his parents as human beings created in the image of God, but a child with biblical instruction also knows that the God who created his parents says, "Honor your mother and father." It is not an either/or proposition but a both/and mandate. We must give our children a biblical worldview, and we must instruct them in the Word of God.¹⁹

A similar premise was underlying the work in this doctoral project. Parents played a major role in helping their children to use the gifts God has given them and to use them for the glory of God.

Education in the church, for our young children and their parents, is a factor that must be included in the work of the church. Thus far the place of the arts in worship, particularly music, and the role of parents in training their children have been addressed in this document. Nevertheless, there is still a question that must be addressed concerning the ability of very young children to achieve the goals set out in this document.

¹⁸ Voddie Baucham, "It's Up to Parents to Teach Children God's Word," *Family Life: Help for Today. Hope for Tomorrow*, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/parenting/foundations/spiritual-development/its-up-to-parents-to-teach-children-gods-word>.

¹⁹ Baucham, "It's Up to Parents."

Brain Development during Childhood

This statement from The National Institute of Mental Health gives facts on the brain development of children and adolescence.

In recent years, powerful new imaging technologies and other approaches have allowed scientists to track the development of the brain during childhood. These studies offer a way to understand how the intellectual abilities and behavioral maturity of children at various ages are rooted in the developing brain.²⁰

The fact sheet gives information on what was known yesterday, versus what is known today. “Thirty years ago, studies tracking the maturation of the brain showed that different parts of the brain grow at different times. There are growth spurts as well as periods of more gradual growth.”²¹ Today, with more refined imaging techniques there is relatively more advancement in discovering the brain development of children.

“Scientists are continually refining imaging techniques to provide more detailed information on brain development, even in very young children. Researchers are tracing how changes in the developing brain underlie milestones in a child’s mental and physical abilities, and behavior.”²²

The Urban Child Institute gives facts on the brain development of children’s earliest years: “The fact that children are affected by their surroundings is too obvious to bear repeating. Child development specialists have produced decades of research showing that the environment of a child’s earliest years can have effects that last a

²⁰ The National Institute of Mental Health, “Brain Development During Childhood and Adolescence (Fact Sheet),” accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/brain-development-during-childhood-and-adolescence/index.shtml>.

²¹ The National Institute of Mental Health, “Brain Development,” 1.

²² The National Institute of Mental Health, “Brain Development,” 1.

lifetime.²³ From this statement, alone, it is clear that young children are capable of learning and participating in activities at a very early age.

A brief introduction of the actual functioning of a child's brain is necessary in order to understand how it actually works, and how it is affected by early experiences.

Between conception and age three, a child's brain undergoes an impressive amount of change. At birth, it already has about all of the neurons [specialized nerve cells], which communicate with one another using electrical and chemical signals it will ever have. It doubles in size in the first year, and by age three it has reached 80 percent of its adult volume. Even more frequently, synapses (the brain's communication specialists) are formed at a faster rate during these years than at any other time. In fact, the brain creates many more of them than it needs: at age two or three, the brain has up to twice as many synapses as it will have in adulthood. These surplus connections are gradually eliminated throughout childhood and adolescence, a process sometimes referred to as blooming and pruning. . . . Repeated use strengthens a synapse. Synapses that are rarely used remain weak and are more likely to be eliminated in the pruning process. Synapse strength contributes to the connectivity and efficiency of the networks that support learning, memory, and other cognitive abilities. Therefore, a child's experiences not only determine what information enters her brain, but also influence how her brain processes information.²⁴

It stands to reason, then, that by the time a child reaches two years of age, the child is ready to become an active listener. As a matter of fact, the more often children use their brain, to receive input the stronger the learning ability becomes. The less often it is used, the weaker that ability becomes, and the greater chance of loss of that ability.

A child's genetic background matters, according to Urban Child Institute, but a child's environment and experiences help build the necessary connections.

The excess of synapses produced by a child's brain in the first three years makes the brain especially responsive to external input. During this period, the brain can "capture" experience more efficiently than it will be able to later, when the pruning of synapses is underway. The brain's ability to shape itself-called-plasticity-lets humans adapt more readily and more

²³ Urban Child Institute, "Baby's Brain Begins Now: Conception to Age 3," accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/why-0-3/baby-and-brain>.

²⁴ Urban Child Institute, "Baby's Brain," 7.

quickly than we could if genes alone determined our wiring. The blooming and pruning, far from being wasteful, is actually an efficient way for the brain to achieve optimal development.²⁵

According to recent brain research the brain starts actively functioning at the beginning of life. When a child is conceived, the brain begins development in the first few weeks. “At age two, the brain’s language areas are involved, developing more synapses and becoming more interconnected. These changes bring on the sudden spike in children’s language abilities, which are sometimes called the vocabulary explosion. A child’s vocabulary often quadruples between his first and second birthday.”²⁶ A process known as myelination is important for efficient and complex brain processes. At the age of two, there is a major increase of these processes.²⁷ This research shows toddlers, at two, are ready, and have the ability to learn.

Still there are at least some who question these results. An article written by Dr. Rhonda Joy Edwards Vansant asks the question, are we sending our children to school too soon? This article gives food for thought as to how we are teaching our children, and what needs to change. These are a few of her concerns in sending children to school too soon. This statement shows how the opposite of freedom of movement can be a hindrance to small children:

I go into preschools and see 2-year-olds practicing flash cards about shapes. Why would these children need to recognize ovals and diamonds? I see 3-year-olds being forced to stand against the wall to recite what they are being made to memorize. They are punished for not standing still for the thirty minutes required. I see 4-year-olds being made to write their names on lined paper. Many are unable to hold the pencil correctly. They struggle, but are forced to keep working . . . even if it is all counterproductive. They are forced to take on academic tasks, but

²⁵ Urban Child Institute, “Baby’s Brain,” 9.

²⁶ Urban Child Institute, “Baby’s Brain,” 11.

²⁷ Urban Child Institute, “Baby’s Brain,” 11.

have had few experiences to develop conceptual understandings. They are handed technology devices to keep them busy and have fun. They play with puzzles on a screen instead of playing with real puzzles. They read words from a screen instead of holding real books. There will be plenty of time for technology. There is little time for childhood.²⁸

This is a serious, thought provoking subject that we must take heed to so that we teach children appropriately to their development.

In explaining brain development in the toddler (ages one to three), The Child Development Media, CDM, begins by saying:

It is common place in academic writing on child development to speak of a given year as being critical. Naturally, in childhood, every year is critical, with the earlier years being more critical simply because it is in the early years that the child gains the ability, confidence, and sense of self worth with which to deal with adversity in later years!²⁹

Additionally, the first three years of a child's life are critical, if for no other reason, according to CDM, 75% of total brain growth and development takes place during that period. In the second and third year, the child is already transforming into the thinking and feeling human that s/he has the potential of being.³⁰

As has been mentioned, previously, and throughout this study, parents are instrumental in nurturing their children, and this is also true in brain development.

Countless studies show that actual physical brain development is enhanced by the child living in an environment that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally nourishing. How important is it that we provide this environment? Considering this toddler will be a fully fledged human being, and a vital member

²⁸ Rhonda Joy Edwards Vasant, "Preschool and Pre-K: Are We Sending Our Children to School Too Soon?" *Huffington Post*, accessed October 3, 2015, http://huffingtonpost.com/dr.rhonda-joy-edwards-vasant/preschool_b_2718737.html.

²⁹ Child Development Media: Videos, books and curricula for child development professionals and parents, "Brain Development in the Toddler (Ages One to Three)," 2015, accessed September 30, 2015, <Http://www.childdevelopmentmedia.com/articles/brain-development-in-the-toddler-ages-one--to-three/>.

³⁰ CDM, "Brain Development" 1.

of society and of our own family, it is one of the most important things in the world.³¹

According to *The Evolution of Childhood* by Melvin Konner, cultural influences are instrumental in the development of young children. In the chapter titled, “The Culture of Infancy and Early Childhood,” Konner shows that cultural influences are evident in our children and its development begins at birth. He mentions that the possibility of cultural influence before birth has been considered by development scientists. According to Konner, “every human group must transmit to children an enormous amount of information about its culture and way of life, which includes such things as language, knowledge of the physical and social environment, rules of social environment . . . music, dance . . . religious ritual and belief.”³²

Methods Used to Enhance the Early Teaching of Toddlers

All this research establishes the importance of teaching children in the earliest moments of their lives and in ways effective for their level of development. There is a book called *Building Brains: 600 Activity Ideas for Young Children Birth to Age 5*, by Suzanne R. Gellens in which she points to the many conclusions that have been drawn from research on the young brain: “Brain research confirms much of what educators have been espousing for years: that the early years are the important years for learning. These beliefs have long been held; now science has validated them.”³³ This conclusion leads

³¹ CDM, “Brain Development,” 1.

³² Melvin Konner, *The Evolution of Childhood: Relationships, Emotion, Mind* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 624.

³³ Suzanne R. Gellens, *Building Brains: 600 Activity Ideas for Young Children Birth to Age 5* (St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2013), 1.

Gellens to ask the question, “How do I use the knowledge gained by brain research to improve my teaching?”³⁴

There have been many attempts to answer Gellen’s question among educators, especially with regard to music. Obviously there are many ways to help a toddler grow and develop mentally and physically, but according to the “Boost Memory and Learning with Music” website, “Music has been found to stimulate parts of the brain, and studies have demonstrated that music enhances the memory. . . .”³⁵ Still, there is the question of when it is most advantageous to begin teaching children.

While many still feel that a young child’s brain has not been fully developed, it has been shown that this is far from the truth. In an article by Dr. Robert A. Cutietta, he begins with the question, “What’s the Right Age to Begin Music Lessons.” His answer is aligned with the brain research already discussed.

There is a growing (and convincing) body of research that indicates a “Window of opportunity” from birth to age nine for developing a musical sensibility within children. During this time, the mental structures and mechanisms associated with processing and understanding music are in the prime stages of development, making it of utmost importance to expose children in this age range to music.³⁶

The important question is not when to start lessons, but what is the goal of music lessons for young children? If the goal is for the child to gain experience and to develop meaningful relationships with music at a young age, and not to master the instruments,

³⁴ Gellens, *Building Brains*, 1.

³⁵ Cheri Lucas, “Boost Memory and Learning with Music,” *PBS Parents*, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/music-arts/boost-memory-and-learning-with-music/>. The study mentioned was specifically targeted at Alzheimer’s and dementia patients, but the connection to enhancing children’s memory and brain function was drawn by the author of the article.

³⁶ Robert A Cutietta, “What’s the Right Age to Begin Music Lessons?” *PBS Parents*, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/music-arts/the-benefits-of-music-education/>.

then the lessons can and should start soon after birth and within the child's first year.

Once the child is three formal lessons can begin.³⁷

Two famous music educators, Zoltan Kodaly (pronounced ko-die-ee) and Carl Orff, believed that it was important to teach music to the youngest children. Both men, before brain research supported their views, believed that children could, and should, learn music in their earliest years. Kodaly said simply, "Music must begin with the very young,"³⁸ but Orff was more directive in his views:

Since the beginning of time, children have not liked to study. They would much rather play, and if you have their interests at heart, you will let them learn while they play; they will find that what they have mastered is child's play. . . .

Elemental music is never just music. It's bound up with movement, dance and speech, and so it is a form of music in which one must participate, in which one is involved not as a listener but as a performer.³⁹

Each method is quite different from the other, but one can see the idea that starting young and involving the child in many ways is a part of both approaches.

The Kodaly Method was focused mainly on children developing a relationship with the music through use of hand-signals and other activities. It is,

. . . It is a way of developing musical skills and teaching musical concepts beginning in very young children. This method uses folk songs, Curwen hand signs,⁴⁰ pictures, moveable-do, rhythm, symbols, and syllables. . . . Zoltan Kodaly was a Hungarian composer, author, educator and expert on Hungarian folk songs.

³⁷ Cutietta, "What's the Right Age?" 3.

³⁸ Espie Estrella, "The Kodaly Method: A Primer," *About Education*, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://musiced.about.com/od/lessonplans/p/kodalymethod.htm>.

³⁹ Espie Estrella, "The Orff Approach: A Primer," *About Education*, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://musiced.about.com/od/lessonplans/tp/orffmethod.htm>.

⁴⁰ John Curwen was a Congregational minister and British educator who developed a system of musical notation known as the tonic sol-fa (more familiarly as do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do) and hand signs to go with each pitch. Espie Estrella, "Profile of John Curwen," *About Education*, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://musiced.about.com/od/famousmusicians1/p/johncurwen.htm>.

Although this method wasn't exactly invented by Kodaly, it was developed by his colleagues and students in the mid-20th century based on his teachings.⁴¹

The Orff method also uses activity to teach children music.

. . . It is a way of introducing and teaching children about music on a level that they can easily comprehend. Musical concepts are learned through singing, chanting, dance, movement, drama and the playing of percussion instruments. Improvisation, composition and a child's natural sense of play are encouraged. . . . This approach to music education was developed by Carl Orff, a German composer, conductor and educator. It was conceived during the 1920s and 1930s while he served as music director of the *Günther-Schule*; a school of music, dance, and gymnastics that he co-founded in Munich.⁴²

These methods were created to enhance the growth and development of person through learning music, and there are many benefits to acquiring musical education at an early age.

An article on *PBS Parents* lists several reasons for introducing a child to music in the early years.

Whether your child is the next Beyonce or more likely to sing her solos in the shower, she is bound to benefit from some form of music education. Research shows that learning the do-re-mis can help children excel in ways beyond the basic ABCs. . . . [L]earning music facilitates learning other subjects and enhances skills that children inevitably use in other areas. A music rich experience for children singing, listening and moving is really bring a very serious benefit to children as they progress into more formal training. . . . Music education increases IQ, makes the brain work harder, gives spatial-temporal skills and improves test scores.

Clearly, then, giving children music, singing, movement, playing, enjoyment, and just plain fun, as a part of their learning is the primary key to teaching our children in an effective manner.

⁴¹ Estrella, "Kodaly Method."

⁴² Estrella, "The Orff Approach."

Conclusion

Teaching children the Word of God through worship, music, and the arts is fundamental in giving them everything they need to lift up the Savior, the congregation and the whole community, as well as the children, themselves. Although teaching starts at home, the congregation, teachers, clergy, and the whole church community have a part to play in ensuring that our children are not left out, or left behind. Artistic expression is a crucial, part of the process, for just about everything that is utilized in the church, and that comes from the church, from the pulpit back to the vestibule, to the entire edifice.

Music is an important factor to use in teaching our children God's Word. Children maintain, sustain, and retain God's Word, when song is involved. It is amazing how they are taught the word verbally, and it may be for a fleeting moment that they remember the words; however, when they are given a melody, or tune, they not only retain the melody they remember the words, and it a remembrance that can last a lifetime.

Parents play a major role in nurturing the children to be able to serve effectively to the glory of God. Training starts at home, and parents need to teach children God's word through song and deed, because children's brains are constantly going through developmental stages. Toddlers have a majority of their brain development in these years. According to developmental scientists, cultural influence also plays an important role in a child's development.

There are many methods that have been created to help children gain early access to the arts, with singing, acting, playing instrumentation, and dancing. It is important to allow the children to be just who they are, and to teach them accordingly, particularly through the arts.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The act of ministry for this project was established upon the hypothesis that children ages two to five, known as TOTS (Teaching our Tots to Serve), can be spiritually formed to serve God's Kingdom through worship, if they are properly prepared and regularly given opportunities to serve within their church's worship experience. This project was established because young children, usually do not have the opportunity to serve in their churches.

Despite extensive research, no churches could be found that permitted toddlers to actively serve during their regular worship service. There is a church named Coronado Baptist Church, in El Paso Texas that asks this question on their website. "Where can I serve . . . ?" Where can I learn?" It leads up to this caption:

Coronado Baptist Church is not a place for spectators. It is a place for family whether you are a two-year-old child, a ninety-five-year-old grandmother, a teenager, a soldier, a busy mom, a college student, or a businessman with big responsibilities; we want you to be a part of our vibrant church community. Here is how you can learn, serve, and grow at Coronado Baptist Church.¹

This is a great quote that invites all ages to learn and serve; nevertheless, the young people at Coronado are sent to their own special learning environment that is separate from the rest of the congregation. This does not give any of the young people an

¹ Coronado Baptist Church, accessed October 17, 2015, <http://www.cbcelp.com>.

opportunity to serve or even to worship with the congregation, but basically just to learn individually as a unit, not collectively in a body of Christ.

This is the same problem that I saw at Omega. The Toddlers had previously been passive observers, not permitted to actively participate in the youth worship services, at Omega Baptist Church. The Toddlers received Christian education, not only in Bible study and Sunday school, but they also attended TOTS Church, three Sundays of the month. The children ages six to twelve attended KIDS Church (Kids in Divine Service), and the teens ages thirteen to nineteen, attended Teens Church. The kids and teens were permitted to serve during the worship services on Youth Sunday, which now takes place every other fourth Sunday of the month, but the toddlers were not. Having assessed the situation at hand, and with the pastor's permission and assistance from the chosen contextual associates, a study was devised utilizing Christian education and the arts, that would prepare the toddlers to actively serve during the youth worship services.

Being the Leader of the TOTS Church, and founder of the acronym TOTS, I knew that a study would have to be devised that would promote the toddlers to an active status in participating in the worship services, versus an inactive one. My own memorable experience as a child growing up in First Wesleyan Methodist Church, helped form me for God's service, but as a toddler, the opportunity to serve in the church was rare.

I could see there was a need to create a project, at OBC, that would enable the younger children to be involved in the worship services, and participate as a part of the body of Christ, like the older children. There was already choir started for the toddlers, but I wanted to take it a step further, and include them as servers during the worship experience.

One goal of this project was to involve parents in order to know God better, and help them to teach their children to know God. This was accomplished by the using scriptures for the toddlers and parents to study together. The study consisted of studying through worship, praise, and the fine arts, utilizing God's Word (teaching and preaching), worship (praising and exalting God), and the arts (through music, singing, dancing, playing instruments, and acting out plays). This was initiated with the understanding that learning in this manner is fun, and thus would be geared toward everlasting encouragement, joy and retainable knowledge. Just as the church mentioned earlier, Coronado Baptist Church in El Paso, already has programs designed for children, which utilizes their gifts and talents to serve the Lord, and the community; however, this study will target the toddlers, who have not previously had the opportunity, to serve in such a capacity as leading the devotions of the entire church.

The children gather more knowledge, when they are spiritually formed, with the Word being taught to them in the home. It is quite evident when the toddlers are taught in their homes, because they seem to excel in learning God's Word at the church. This way of teaching toddlers, is a model that can be used in any church. By letting the children come, to learn about Jesus Christ, and to be servants starting at a young age, they will form a way of life that includes service to the Kingdom for themselves and for their children, from generation to generation.

Methodology

The methodology applied for this project was qualitative, with triangulation points of pre and post testing, interviews, observances, and surveys. The ethnographic

research tradition is also utilized for this study. This qualitative method was chosen because it encouraged participation by a number of different people. The toddlers were interviewed and observed in the home by the parents, on a daily basis, and in the church by the contextual associates, and the congregation. “The intent of ethnographic research is to obtain a holistic picture of the subject of study with emphasis on portraying the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them and relevant others. . . . The ethnographic study includes in-depth interviewing and continual and ongoing participant observation of a situation.”²

Parents with the toddlers met together to have the project that was going to be implemented; explained how it was going to be implemented, with the parents being the facilitators of the actual lessons. The parents were given instructions, letting them know that it was a daily, to weekly endeavor that they would be undertaking. They would function as the Old Testament Scripture designates in Deuteronomy 6:7. The parents were given consent forms to sign, verifying that they would be responsible for completing this project from beginning to end. Some parents signed the consent form, but came back to say they would not be able to accomplish the task at hand. Some parents signed the consent form with stipulations that they would be out of town periodically. Those parents were given permission to proceed, if they were able to continue, and be diligent in working on the lessons with their toddler to completion.

A study was devised that was similar to what the toddlers were used to in their regular curriculum in TOTS Church. It was intended to put less of a burden on the parents, as well as the children. The lesson plan consisted of the scripture to be

² John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 207.

memorized; an activity pertaining to the scripture, such as a page for the toddler to color, a song that was relative to the scripture, with an opportunity to sign the song with ASL, and to also use dance movements. All of this was intended to create a way for the children to enjoy learning the scripture by applying arts and crafts, which in turn would help the children to maintain and retain the scripture.

To determine whether or not the toddlers were suitable to participate as servers during worship service, pictorial instrumentation of a pre and post test were administered. Pictures of various acts of service rendered in the church were given to the toddlers who were not able to voice their thoughts as readily as the older children, such as pictures of greeters, ushers, and singers in a children's church choir. The parents were also given pre and post testing, with their own set of questions, which were different from those the toddlers received. The toddlers' attitude and behavior was assessed during the pre-testing, to ascertain the fact that they were ready to proceed. With the completion of the testing, verification was given that the tots and parent were ready to continue with the lesson plan. They also went through the triangulation of interviews, before the lesson plans were distributed, in order to be ensured of the fact that the participants were ready to move on to the project study.

On April 20, 2014, during the regular youth Sunday planning meeting, which usually takes place every third Sunday, the project of the "Spiritual Formation, of TOTS: Preparing Ages Two To Five For Christian Service Through Christian Education And The Arts" was introduced to the contextual associates.

The consent or permission slips that were signed by the parents of the participating children that denoted the involvement with them, along with their children,

and their dedicated commitment to the project (see Appendix C) were counted; there was a total of eight toddlers, along with their parents, who would make a commitment of starting and finishing the six weeks study.

Implementation

On April 27, 2014, the participants were given interviews, (see video) and a pre-test to determine their stance on parents teaching their children, and the children's awareness of what serving in the church entails. Some of the questions are as follows: (See Appendix A, for full details.)

Parents

1. Do you teach your children about Jesus in the home?
2. Would you be able to teach your child the curriculum for the project, on a daily basis?
3. Have you, or are you now, serving in any capacity in the church?
4. If so when did you serve, and in what capacity?
5. Do you have any suggestions to improve this project?

TOTS

6. Do you know about Jesus? Tell me about Jesus.
7. How do you learn about Jesus?
8. Do you know what a job is?
9. Do you have jobs at home? Tell me about them.
10. Do you know there are jobs in the church?
11. Do you know another word for jobs, and what it is called in the church?

There were pictures shown to the younger children; one, was only twenty-two months old; others were in their early stages of age two, and unable to read and explain their answers, verbally. Each child was shown four sets of pictures, one with ushers wearing gloves, holding fans, and holding out their hands to direct people to a seat in the church; another set with a children's choir wearing choir robes; the next picture consisted of an older man walking down the aisle of the church, along with a youth carrying

collection plates. The next picture showed greeters welcoming people coming into the church. The toddler would point to a picture when a description was given of what the people in the pictures were doing, such as, “What picture shows people singing in a choir?” etc. After evaluating the answers, it was determined from the answers given whether the participants were ready to enter the project. All participants were eligible to proceed with the project,

There was a total of eight toddlers, and their parents who participated in the study, who were able to make a commitment to participate in the six-week study. There was a total of four boys and four girls. There was one five-year-old, four who were age four, one, age three, one, who was age two, and one twenty-two months old.

May 4, 2014, the participants started the initial project. The parents were given a folder that contained the first lesson, which consisted of instructions for the parents, scripture, a drawing to color, and a song, all pertaining to the initial scripture, which could also be danced to and signed (ASL). The week following each lesson, the child and parents were again interviewed, and questioned, to determine awareness, and progress. Then the next week’s folders were distributed to the participants. This format continued for four weeks as outlined in the subsequent paragraphs.

Week 1, May 4, 2014

The first lesson was two- fold. In order to ensure that the parents understood the total process and what was expected of them; they learned a scripture that was solely for them, enabling them to understand their role in the entire study, and to prepare them to help nurture and spiritually form their children. They were given the Old Testament

scripture for this project, Deuteronomy 6:5-7. They were told to read the entire chapter, in order to get a full understanding of the Word. The children were given the first commandment to study, Exodus 20:3. This lesson was to teach them that God is the most important being of all. The song that they learned was an original, with the music played by Timothy Green, Director of Music at Summit Christian Church, which he put on a CD that was put in the lesson packet; “Keep My Commandments.”

Keep my commandments, says the Lord,
 Keep my commandments, says the Lord
 Keep my commandments, says the Lord
 And everything will be alright, alright, alright
 Keep me commandments, says the Lord
 Keep my commandments says the Lord
 Keep my commandments says the Lord
 And everything will be all, everything will be all
 Everything will be alright³ (See video)

The children were given a picture to color, of a family sitting around the dining room table having bible study.

Week 2, May 11th, 2014

The second lesson was from the New Testament scripture for the study project. Luke 18:15-17. The lesson taught the children how much Jesus loves them. The song was “Jesus Loves the Little Children.” (See video) The children colored a picture of a child sitting on Jesus’ lap, surrounded by other children.

³ Music and lyrics by Judith E. Norvell, Copyright © 2014

Week 3, May 18th

The third lesson, from John 12:26b, which taught the children how to honor God by serving, was void of worship and songs, movement, and the fun aspect of learning the Word. It mainly consisted of the scripture, in order to determine the difference study makes, with, or without the arts. Hangers, with the scriptures written on them with markers, and stickers with pictures of bibles, crosses, church buildings, etc. were given to the participants, to hang in their cars, on their rearview mirrors, to help the children to remember the scriptures, as they went along their way, as the Old Testament Scripture designates in Deuteronomy 6:7. This was particularly useful for this week.

Week 4, May 25th

The fourth and last lesson was John 13:5. The parents were asked to read the entire pericope (John 13:1-20) in order to get the fullness of the lesson. The children learned John 13:5. This lesson taught the children how to serve, just as Jesus did with the washing of the disciples' feet. The song sung to the tune of "This is the Way to Wash Your Face," is an original.

This is the way to wash your feet,
 Wash your feet, wash your feet
 This is the way to wash your feet,
 Just like Jesus
 Just like Jesus did the twelve disciples
 So this is the way to serve, way to serve, way to serve
 This is the way to serve, just like Jesus
 Just like Jesus, just like Jesus⁴

The children colored a picture of Jesus washing one of the disciples' feet.

⁴ Lyrics by Judith E. Norvell, Copyright ©, 2014.

Week 5 and 6 June 1-June 8

The participants of the project study, prepared for the final presentation. They were taught duties such as ushering, greeting, etc.

On June 1, Post-Test questions and interviews were also given, asking each participant how they felt about the lessons, and if they felt they were successful. (See video for results). Not all participants were interviewed each week. Either participants did not show up to be interviewed, or they were out of town, and/or unavailable to meet with the researcher. Some of the participants received their lessons late, and gave brief feedback on what transpired previously. This does not include the participants who had already discussed with the researcher that they would be out of town. Feedback was given upon their return.

On June 22nd, the participants were videotaped to show the results of the final implementation of the full project. (See video Appendix, F).

On June 29th, which was youth Sunday, the video would have been displayed to show the results of the project. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties, the video did not work; however, the young people served that Sunday for the first time, and did an excellent job. The congregation, therefore, saw the children actually serving. A survey was given to the congregation, which showed ninety-nine percent satisfaction with the toddlers and the overall project.

Summary of Learning

As stated earlier, post-test interviews (See video) and questions were given at the end of each session. Questions given were those that gave answers as to whether the tots

were learning, and if they enjoyed the learning process. Questions included: What did you learn? Did you enjoy learning with the arts? Did you enjoy the week without the arts? The attitudes, attention span, and understanding of the lesson were assessed.

The analysis of the data was basically revealed through the parents. Some of the parents and children had to go out of town, and were given a packet for the entire four weeks. Those participants, who were there to receive the lessons on a weekly basis and were able to give feedback/post-test, in some cases, were far more advanced than those who were not there regularly. However, in other instances, certain children were ahead of the others. It was due to the fact that the parents were doing as the scripture denotes, unexpectedly giving them the word at all times. The outcome of the total project and participation is shown in the video, which presents the reenactment of the lessons, and videos of the children serving in the OBC congregation, which has become an ongoing process, which allows the ethnographic process to continue to function.

Some people seem to think that the age of two is too young for children to be a part of the Sunday worship service. The rejection, however, of these servants has mainly come from people outside Omega, who have never experienced, or seen this accomplished. The results of the survey show that only one person at OBC has that opinion.

Survey Results: There were fifty-four respondents.

Question #1: Do you think children two- five are too young to serve in the church? There are Fifty-Three who feel children two to five are not too young to serve in the church. One disagreed, and thought that children two to five are too young to understand, and are not developed yet.

According to Dr. Marie Fortune, this is not true. She states:

Many people think children under 4 are “too young” to understand the concepts of Jesus and Christian behavior. They are not. Small children have not yet cluttered their minds with skepticism; so it’s a great time to teach the reality of Jesus! As a wise man once said, “Faith requires imagination. You have to be able to perceive the things you believe in.” Hebrews 11:1 says, “. . . faith is the evidence of things not seen.”⁵

Question #2a: Would you like to see the TOTS to continue to serve in the church?

All fifty-four of the respondents of the survey, even the one who felt that the toddlers were too young to serve, think the toddlers should continue to serve in the church. The negative responder wrote, “In limited role, for now.”

Question #2b: If your answer is yes, how often do you think that they should serve? Twenty-eight responded quarterly, five (5), every Sunday, one every other Sunday, two every youth Sunday, three yearly, three monthly, six every month, one often, four no answer, and one every two months.

Question #3: As a parent, or guardian would you be willing for you and your child to participate in a similar project? Twenty-six acquiesced, three responded with a no, nine responded with N/A, and sixteen did not answer.

Question #4: The rating of this project, on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest was as follows: 5=thirty-five, 4=fifteen, 3= two, 2=one and one was not rated.

Question #5: Comments: There were so many encouraging and affirmative remarks; here are a few:

⁵ Mary-Kate Warner, “pray-n-Play” Bible Ideas for 2-4 Year Olds, email received September 17, 2015, <http://www.Teach Sunday School.com/top/p/praynplay.html>.

“I think the more the younger children are exposed, the better and more deeply they learn. Service becomes a part of them when they’ve been doing it since they were two.”

“It’s important that our children have Christian education and experience at a young age.”

“Wish I could have participated more, but please don’t stop doing what you’re doing.”

“Mark 10:14 “Let the children come.”

“Praise the Lord, Rev. Judy Norvell for your zeal and commitment, with God’s little ones.”

“All are called to serve, even the little ones.

The one negative remark states: “TOTS is a great program and very much needed however, age 2, 3, 4 or 5, I feel is too young to fully comprehend what is being taught. Their attention span is not developed.”

Finally, one response seems especially apt: “It is an awesome opportunity. You never know who may be blessed to lead. It starts in the beginning to build our future leaders.”

Everyone has a right to their own opinion; nevertheless, these responses strongly suggest that when you teach toddlers to sing, dance, sign and utilize the arts along with Christian education, the children interact, are more attentive, retain and maintain God’s Word. It is also important to note that some toddlers are more attentive, more mature and more advanced than others. Those who were two and under did not always understand what was being asked of them. For example, when one of the toddlers was asked what

she learned that particular week, she was silent. Either she did not understand, or was in one of those silent moods. Later she was very talkative and excited about one of the songs she had learned, and wanted to sing it. When she washed her mother's feet, she seriously took part in that serving activity. A year later, she was reluctant to sing the final song. This does not necessarily show that the child is not ready to serve. There are times that adults, also, are moody, for whatever the reason may be.

Another incident that must be noted here supports the notion that toddlers have the ability to remember and retain scriptures they have learned. One of the toddlers, who was two during the initial project, was one of those quiet ones at times when he was questioned; also during the foot washing he was not very cooperative. The child was given a scripture a few months ago with the dancing and movement that was discussed. The next week during bible study, the scripture was repeated, "When I am afraid," I said, but had to stop and think what the rest of the scripture was. The child piped in, "I will trust in you." Psalm 56:3. This is proof that toddlers can listen, and remember the scriptures, especially when you teach them in an artsy way.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research project was to develop a ministry model that would allow, young children, ages two to five, known as TOTS, at Omega Baptist Church to participate on youth Sunday, and actually serve not only during the worship portion of the service, but throughout the entire service. The project was implemented as a participatory study, along with their parents, in the church, and in their individual homes.

Most importantly of all, we wanted our children to experience spiritual formation. In Lacy Finn Borgo's journal article, "As for me and my House: Children and Adults Co-Pilgrim in this Life with God," she states: Christian spiritual formation is the process by which all the parts of the person come to live a life with God. Everyone receives a spiritual formation, just like everyone receives an education."⁶ The question posed is, "What kind of spiritual formation will children receive?" It has only been within the last five years that the phrase "spiritual formation for children" has become a part of our rhetoric.⁷

The children and their parents have simultaneously flourished and have been spiritually formed, or spiritually connected with God throughout this study. They have flourished and connected by studying together on a daily basis, by praying and having devotions together, by singing God's praises, and worshipping together, and by serving in the Kingdom of God.

In chapter one, I shared my story of how I was raised in a family that praised the Lord, studied, and prayed, which was a way of life. My family truly followed God's word in teaching us, as we went about our daily activities, as Deuteronomy 6:7 commands. Music was a prominent feature in the home throughout my childhood. My parents have sung together since high school, which has been over seventy years. They in turn have taught us, their children, the aspects of learning God's Word through singing, worship and the arts, and Christian education. Through their influence, training, and with further education; advancement toward professional endeavors has taken place in my life.

⁶ Lacy Finn Borgo, "As for me and my House: Children and Adults Co-Pilgrims in this Life with God," *Conversations Journal.com: Flourishing Living Well in the Kingdom of God* 12.2 (Fall/Winter, 2014): 65, accessed August 24, 2015,

⁷ Borgo, "Children and Adults Co-Pilgrims in this Life with God," 65.

Therefore, while serving as a member, associate minister, prayer leader assistant, teacher, and TOTS Church leader at OBC, memories of days gone by enveloped my mind. This enabled me to see a need for the toddlers to become more active in the congregation.

That is how this project grew, and a passion for young children, teaching them the Word of God, particularly through song came into fruition. Through this project it was discovered that young children can do so much more for the Lord than just sing. The children did not let me down, they proved that point victoriously.

Some of the statements from the parents who participated in the project support the efficacy of the work. This statement is from the mother of a toddler who is now five years old, but was four when she went through the lessons of the project. Her mother writes:

My daughter learned the importance of using her time and talents to serve God. She learned that God comes first and that serving God is fun. The con would be that as parents, we are busy and it felt like extra work on top of everything else we need to do. My daughter enjoys learning about God, and I am happy that you reinforced that serving Him is not optional, but it's what you are required to do.

Another mother, who is a single parent, wrote a statement that not only showed her son's growth, who was five at the time of the project, and is now six, but also her own growth in the Lord.

We had the pleasure of participating in Rev. Judith's project, where children served in the church. It has been an amazing experience, and I love the growth I have seen in my son. I grew up in the church, but never was able to participate in service as I have seen these children do. We were able to sing in the children's choir and participate in the holiday plays, but not much more beyond that. Children are taught to be seen, and not heard during church. As a child, all the youth of my church sat in our own little section off to the side, so we wouldn't disrupt the adults. Even now, most churches have pull-outs for children during service. But is that really beneficial to the children? This project has given my child a balance of respect and maturity for true worship and service in God's

house; something that can only be taught or achieved through the actual practice of serving in the church. My son has had the opportunity of opening service through prayer, welcoming the members and guests, as well as leading the choir through song. His favorite act of service was washing his loved one's feet, as Jesus himself had done. He of course liked it even more when I had to wash his. My son now has a level of confidence in his praise, and love for the Lord that most adults are still trying to achieve. He feels that he is an important part of the church family, and now knows he doesn't have to be an adult to be able to serve God. His voice has been heard, as well as the other children who participated. They were able to prove that you're never too young or too old, to show your love for God. We really enjoyed this experience, and hope to have more like it.

A father gave these remarks:

The learning experience for us truly enriched our child's relationship with the Lord. She enjoys coming to church, because she now knows she is a part of the body. Many times we forget as adults the importance of our children in the worship experience, but also know we must always show how God should be the most important thing in our lives. The project showed us that it is not too early for your child to start learning about the Lord. Our daughter was able to learn scripture and could even explain what God gave her in word. The study also made it easier for me to discuss the Lord with my daughter at her own level encouraging her to pray and share the gifts God has given her.

She is one of the children, who is part of the Tots dancers, who does a beautiful job in serving through that capacity.

Some of the challenges with this project, were not having enough assistance with the interviews, pre and post testing; I was often solely on my own in accomplishing this task. At times it was also hard to contact the parents, and to have quality time to spend with them to receive feedback on the outcome of their experiences concerning the lessons.

This project was to be two-fold; it was to be for the parents as well as for the children; however, I seemed to have failed to get the message across to some of the parents, who felt they were doing extra work. These parents, teach their children in their home, about God. It is evident in the way that their children apply themselves, in church,

by being the first to give the right answers, when they are asked questions about the bible. They also readily take part in serving the Lord, at all times.

Nevertheless, I am satisfied with the outcome of the project, in seeing in how the children have progressed in knowing the Word, and how they are eager to serve each Youth Sunday. There are some remarks that must be added about how this project can be improved. These are drawn from the feedback that has been received from the survey, observances, interviews, parents, and others.

First of all, there needs to be more one on one interaction, between the parents of the toddlers, and the instructor. The toddlers adjusted well; however, some of the parents had serious problems with adjusting to the time that it took to implement the curriculum. Some of the parents felt as if they were being punished, or bombarded with extra work that they did not need, or want. What is needed are ways to invite the parents to become excited about the project, and to peak their interest to participate, and to become as engaged as the children. One possible way to get the parents more involved would be to have combined classes with the parents and the toddlers. The main foci would be to instruct the parents on how to enjoy helping to teach and spiritually form their children. An important feature would be to encourage, and give the parents incentives, as they continue with the process of teaching their children during the weekly lessons. An award banquet, and/or recognition certificates would be a way of lifting up the spirits of the parents, to let them know they are doing what God has called them to do, that they are doing it well, and that it is appreciated

No, I do not expect families to be holier than thou, and force Christ down their throats, and their children's throats, twenty-four seven; but we have to grasp hold of the

children with the word while they are young, and instill in them, Christ is the most important being in our lives and our children's lives. We have to get them away from TV, video games, and the like. We have to teach them more about Jesus, but first of all, we have to draw the parents back in to the things of Christ, to those needful things.

What will be done in the future, and will be done differently, the next time with a curriculum for children, is to have classes for the parents, and get them on the same path as the children. It would be advantageous to ask them, what do you want? What do you need from me, to help you teach your children about the Lord?

More time would be spent getting and giving more feedback to the parents, for they are the ones who are teaching their children. More time would be spent in getting that message across to the parents. No, we are not Jewish at OBC, and we do not necessarily follow the Shema, not as rigidly as they; however, we need to take heed to the Word, and do as Deuteronomy 6: 7, as God commands us to teach our children, as we go about our day.

Everything that the parents shared with me, I have taken to heart; hopefully, this project can be improved to meet the needs of all involved, especially our little ones, as we go about teaching them about God. Overall, this project has helped children, parents, and an entire congregation to become acclimated to allowing children to do what God has created them to do; to serve in the Kingdom of God.

The climax of this project features our (my family and friends') singing group, "Wilson Family and Friends," and some of the children who participated in the project, with two songs that exhibit the fact that children are theologically grounded by knowing and loving God as they sing, "I Am What God Says I Am" by Maurette Brown Clark,

and “Teach Me,” by yours truly. May this study be a blessing to all people who read it, ponder it and implement it in their own church setting.

APPENDIX A
PRE AND POST-TEST FOR TOTS

1. Do you know about Jesus? Tell me about Jesus?
2. How do you learn about Jesus
3. Do you know what a job is?
4. Do you have jobs at home? Tell me about them.
5. Do you know that there are jobs in the church?
6. Do you know another word for jobs, and what it is called in the church?
7. Name some of the jobs at church.
8. What job do you think you would like to do at church?
9. Do you know what it is to be called?
10. Name some of the ways that you might have served in the church.

For those too young to answer verbally, some of the questions given above, a picture will be used, such as a picture of a choir, or an usher, which the child can point to when asked what they are.

APPENDIX B

PRE AND POST-TEST FOR PARENTS

1. Do you teach your children about Jesus in the home?
2. Would you like to be able to teach your child the curriculum for the project, on a daily basis?
3. Do you have any suggestions to improve the project, if so; would you be willing to share them?
4. If you for-see any, would you be willing to share them?
5. Do you have any concerns about the project?
6. If so, what are those concerns?
7. Have you, or are you now serving in any capacity in the church?
8. If so, when did you serve?
9. In what capacity did you serve?
10. Would you be willing to volunteer in the TOTS Church Ministry?

APPENDIX C
PROJECT CONSENT FORM

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT-INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____ am a member or a non-member in attendance at Omega Baptist Church. I understand that I will be assisting in the preparation and/or delivery of the project Reverend Judith E. Norvell (Rev. Judy), is developing for her Doctor of Ministry Degree for United Theological Seminary, as a Contextual Associate, and/or a participant. I consent to participate in this project.

I acknowledge that Reverend Judith E. Norvell has explained the details of the project which includes approximately six classes or meeting sessions, of which two of those sessions will be utilized in preparing for a final presentation of the participants, and the actual presentation, two interviews, and pre and post testing. She also explained that each session will be for one hour and will require a commitment of my presence in each session, for the full duration of the sessions.

I agree to participate and commit to assisting in this endeavor, by being present in each session throughout its duration. I also consent to and give my permission for Reverend Judith E. Norvell to use my responses to any surveys, interviews, and other media and/or recordings of sessions with information pertaining to results of my attendance and participation in this project, as she completes her Doctor of Ministry initiative.

Numbers and letters will be used to identify each participant; therefore, the identity of the participants and their output from this project will be kept confidential. This project is still being finalized; therefore, the hours and amount of sessions are subject to change.

Signature _____
Date _____

APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE of Doctoral Study Project

Spiritual Formation of TOTS (Teaching Our Tots To Serve):
Preparing Ages Two To Five For Christian Service
Through Christian Education And The Arts

You have just viewed a video showing snippets of the four week study that the Tots have taken, along with their parents. Today, you have also seen Tots serve in different capacities in the church that they have not previously served.

For statistical purposes, I need your feedback. Please circle/fill out this questionnaire:

1. Do you think children ages two to five are too young to serve in the church?

Yes No

If your answer is yes, please comment.

2. Would you like to see the Tots continue to serve in the church?

Yes No

If your answer is yes, how often do you think that they should serve?

Quarterly Yearly Other

3. If you are a parent, mentor or guardian of a Tot, would you be willing for you or your child to participate in a similar project?

Yes No

4. How would you rate this project on a scale of 1-5?

1 2 3 4 5

5. Further comments

APPENDIX E

VIDEO

The video shows the pre and post-tests, interviews, and the presentation of the children along with their parents. The children, particularly the youngest children, two years old and younger, do quite a bit of nodding of the head, because they are not able to verbalize their answers as readily as those age three, four and five. There are excerpts of the toddlers answering the pre and post test questions, as well as some excerpts of the parents giving their answers. The presentation of the four lessons that the families participated in is given, which covers all of the scriptures, drawings, and songs that they have learned during the four weeks. The children, who did not participate in the lessons, are extras who sit on the platform and sing the songs along with the participants of the project. The last lesson on John 13:1-20 is dramatized by an older youth who portrays Jesus pouring the water into the basin so that the toddlers and their parents can wash each other's feet.

At the end of the video are two songs sung by the singing group, "The Wilson Family and Friends" that are very significant to this study project; "I Am What God Says I Am," by Maurette Brown Clark, from "The Dream" Album, © 2007. "Teach Me." In this taping, five generations are singing, ranging from two to ninety in age. The taping takes place at The Rising Star Baptist Church, home of the late Rev. Dr. Peter Hill, and Pat Hill, uncle and aunt of the family. The last song entitled "Teach Me" is an original I wrote for this project. Mentor Daryl Hairston directed me to elaborate more on the love of God by reading Walter Brueggemann's excerpt on Deuteronomy 6:5-7, and his writings on the love of God. The song, "Teach Me" inspired by the Holy Spirit, came out of that reading. Video link, <http://kaltura.com/Tiny/uan55>.

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